



FIGHTING FOR FAVOUR

By W. G. Tarbet

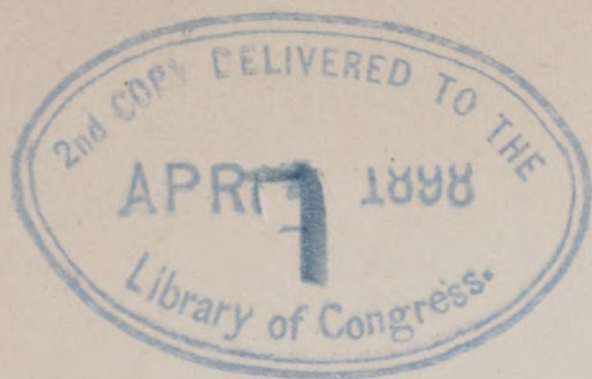
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FIGHTING FOR FAVOUR

A ROMANCE

BY
W. G. ✓ TARBET
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PREFACE.

WHEN I took in hand to write this book I little knew what labour there was to the making of one, but encouraged by the interest taken in it by my dear daughter and by the Rev. James Melville, minister to our needs in the town of Anstruther, I have persevered to an end. Lest it should survive a generation or two, or longer, and come to be doubted, I have asked the said Rev. James Melville to put in the forefront of it a page or two out of his diary that relates to a similar affair of the pirates :

“ At my first coming to Anstruther (in 1587) there fell out a heavy accident, whilk vexit my mind mickle at first, but drew me mickle nearer my God, and teacht me what it was to have a care of a flock. Ane of our crears (a light bark with one mast) returning from England, was beset by an English pirate, pillaged, and a very guid honest man of Anstruther slain therein. The whilk loon (rascal) coming pertly to the

very road of Pittenweem, spulyied a ship lying therein, and misused the men thereof. This wrang could not be suffered by our men, lest they should be made a common prey to sic limmers. Therefore, purchasing a commission, they riggit out a proper flyboat, and every man encouraging another, made almaist the haill honest and best men in all the town to go in her to the sea.

“When aucht or ten days were endit, and they in sight were returning, with all guid tokens of joy, flags, streamers, and ensignie displayed, we received them with great joy, and went together to the kirk and praised God.

“The captain for the time recounted to me truly their haill proceeding. That they, meeting with their admiral, a great ship of St. Andrews, weel riggit out by the burghs, being fine of sail, went before her all the way, and made every ship they foregathered with, of whatsoever nation, to strike and do homage to the King of Scotland, shawing them for what cause they were riggit forth, and inquiring of knaves and pirates.

“From them they approached to the shore at

Suffolk, and finds by Providence the loon wha had newlins taken a crear of our awn town and was spulying her. Howsoon they spy ane coming warlike, the loons leave their prize, and run their ship on land, our flyboat after, and almaist was on land with them ; yet staying hard by, they delash their ordnance at the loons, and a number going a-land, pursues and takes a half-dozen of them, and puts them aboard in their boat. They then took the pirates' ship whilk they brought back with them, with the half-dozen of the loons; whereof twa were hangit on our pierend, the rest in St. Andrews ; with nae hurt at all to any of our folks, wha ever since syne have been free from English pirates. All praise to God for ever. Amen."

And ane other gentleman has writ to me the following so that my tale may have authority, the which statement can be verified by ony that care to look up the Process book in Edinburgh :

"The Lanarkshire leadmines, under the care of Thomas Foulis, goldsmith in Edinburgh, and Bewis Bulmer, an Englishman, were now

beginning to be a source of profit. The lead was transported on the backs of horses to sundry parts of the realm, but the greater part to Leith, where it was disposed of for exportation. Just however as all the mining difficulties had been overcome, the enterprisers found trouble of a different kind. The broken men of the Borders had heard of this valuable metal passing along the uplands of Clydesdale, and it seemed to them not too hazardous an adventure to cross the hills and make a dash at such a booty. We therefore now hear of the carriers of the lead, servants of Thomas Foulis, being occasionally beset on their way, and robbed by the Borderers of horses, armour, clothing, and their haill carriage."

And so having quoted guid authority for my story I leave it to whaever may read, and wish them less bother in the reading than in the writing o't.

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FIGHTING FOR FAVOUR.

CHAPTER I.

HEIR OF AN AULD RACE !

It was in the spring of the year 1585 that I buried my poor mother, and came away sair-hearted and friendless from her grave. Aside her lay my father, and, at that moment, fain would I have lain me down atween them.

I went home to my lonely house, and found my father's hound, Auld Robin, courying into the hearth and whining maist desolate. It was not manly, but I lay down also and joined my cries to his.

For two or three days I bade me in my chamber till the bitterness of my grief was past; then, as man maun aye do, I began to consider

my position. And little gladness got I out of that.

Heir of an auld race was I; but heir to what besides ?

A house, through the roof of which the sun and rain of heaven found easy way; some fields, cold and wet; and some cattle, mair fit to sell for bones than as food for Christians.

A gowden heirship truly—for that was all. Nay, not quite all !

In a coffer I found twenty shares of £100 Scots apiece of a gold mine, each share setting forth as how Regent Moray granted to Cornelius de Vois, a Dutchman, or Company by him formed, “ the richt for nineteen years, to search for gold and silver in ony part o’ the realm o’ Scotland, to break the ground, mak’ sinks and pots therein, and to put labourers thereto,” paying the Government in requital eight ounces of gold or silver for every hundred of the same found.

I took the bundle of parchment up in my hand, carried it to the fire and stapped it in.

Poor father ! In his hurry to make the house of Duras once again what it had been, he was

all the more easily enticed into an adventure, which, at the first, promised such speedy reward. His golden dream became a passion ! Into the venture he went a strong man and tight, out from it he came bent and broken-hearted. Dupe of a dupe he was, to whom the alluring gold was as a woman's eye, "which enticeth her lover into her bosom."

Poor father, who can blame thee ? Verily for thy dream thou didst pay a penance in thy weary wanderings in Nithsdale and Clydesdale, where small tastes of gold here and there whetted thine appetite, and led thee on.

Poor father, thy dream is over ; and fated to be ever but a dream !

I mused long and sadly over all his wasted life, and wakened up, only as evening fell, to the fact that I was no further with a plan of my own. I clutched hold of my hair with both hands, and set myself to think.

Clearly, unless I meant to live as a hermit all my life, there was not enough to support me on the remains of the estate. Therefore I must go and find a means of livelihood. But where ? I might go to France and go in the Scots

Guards, but would that better me? For one tale of fortune found there, I had heard of ten of misfortune. There were other openings as a soldier, but none of any promise unless by the aid of influence; and of that I had none. Besides, though as fond of a play with swords, or the drawing of a bow, or the shooting of a musquet, as my neighbours, I was conscious of a great longing for something stable to bind myself to. Methinks the years of wild and visionary dreams I had lived in with my father had sickened me of chance. So I turned from the usual fate of one left such as I, and cast me about for some other.

I was twenty-two, and of great stature and breadth, strong and of good courage—surely, I thought, with these I need not despair. But, think as I would, I could come to no settled determination, and so went to bed.

Scarce had I lain me down when the recollection of one Simon Carter, a merchant in Anstruther, and a cousin of my mother's, came into my mind. He had come late into our house when I was but a lad, and had departed early next morning. My mother had wakened

me from my sleep to come down and show myself ere he went. It was but a dim dream to me, except for this—that he put his hand under my chin and looked into my face.

“ And what are ye gaun to mak’ o’ him ? ” he asked my mother, roughly. “ A moudiewarp like his father, eh ? ”

My mother gave him hard words for this at first, but them he heeded not; then she cried.

“ Nay, mistress,” he said, more kindly, “ I meant not ill ; but an ye wad save the lad some unhappiness, pit him till an honest trade. It’s maybe no sae dainty, but it’s mair certain than gold huntin’.”

So there and then, as I lay, I determined to seek this Simon Carter, and see if he could put me to an honest trade.

CHAPTER II.

I SELL MY HEIRSHIP AND HAVE THE BEST OF THE BARGAIN.

I WOKE with the sun in my eyes next morning, and in good heart. Slow to come to a determination, I am none backward in bringing it to its end, so went out and saddled my nag. I rode into Lanark, to the house of a writer there. He was an honest man, as far as I could tell, so I made up my mind to speak to him plainly, it being in my power to do nought else, knowing little or nothing of the value of land.

I told him of my wish to sell the house and land outright, and, though he had had many dealings of a like nature with my father, he cast his head up with many words, signifying his wish to see the land first.

“But ye have the rest o’t already, Maister Inglis,” I said, wearying to have done and away, “surely the bulk o’ a thing is a guid

enough swatch o' the rest. Look here, now, mak' an offer for stick, stane, and bane."

"It's weel seen that ye have been broucht up by your faither, for——"

"Never mind my faither," I said, sharply.

The man gave me a tolerant wave of the hand, as though to say, "Oh, thae young folks!" and then said:

"But as I kent your faither, sae for his sake——"

"I'll understand ye better, Maister Inglis, if ye talk plain, and say for the land's sake."

He sat straight upon his stool, and when he spoke his voice had lost its savour.

"I was minded to treat ye kindly, but there's no 'greeing with them that will na 'gree. How muckle do ye want for this bit bog o' yours and all that's on it, stick, stane, and bane—principally bane, I'm thinking, with respect to the beasts?"

"Weel, I was thinking to come oot o't with £200 in my pouch," I said.

"Twa hunner pound!" he cried, and threw his arms up. "Who do you think would give that for't?"

“ You,” I said, looking him between the eyes.

“ Ay, man, is that your thought ? ”

“ It is,” I said.

“ And what mak’s ye think that ? ”

“ Why ? ” said I. “ It would be a silly like thing for you to own the outlying fields and not the home anes.”

“ Wha says I own any o’ yer land ? ”

“ Toots, Maister Inglis,” I said, “ there’s no use in arguing about a thing that baith o’ us kens is true.”

He gave me a gloom of his eyes at that, for the man was so used to the windings and turnings of his trade, that a bit of truth to him was like a sudden wash of water at his feet. There was no harm in his possessing the farm, only he wished it to be a secret; for, had the folks known, they would have thought he was making more money out of them than he ought. In this he was right, for at no time is a man more subject to ill-tongued rumour than when he is getting on in the world.

“ I’ll give ye a hunner for it,” he said, turning to his desk.

“ If that bid was for my faither’s sake,

Maister Inglis, I thank ye. But it was mista'en generosity, for there's them I ken who will be quite willing to give twa for't. So guid day."

I turned on my heel, and was just closing the door, when he called me back.

"Is that the least ye'll tak' for't?" he asked.

"It is," I said.

"Just sign that, then, will ye?" he said, handing me the agreement drawn out with only the price left blank.

"I see ye were prepared," I said.

The man gave a bit smirk to himself and said :

"Ye maybe think ye've driven a hard bargain, Maister David Duras, but I micht as weel tell ye, to keep yer pride down, that I was quite prepared to offer you £250."

"Oh, but," said I, "there's time to draw back yet."

The bit smirk ran off his face of a sudden, and he tried to hide his fright with a laugh.

"Tits, I was only joking. I only wanted to let on I had the best o' the deal. So sign, man, sign."

He fairly forced me down to the chair, and had none too ready breath till I had put my name down to the paper.

“I’m for the money just now,” I said ;
“short reckonings mak’ long freens.”

“Oh, ye’ll get it, for ye’re a *long* friend, I could easy spare,” he said, getting the rough side of his tongue as soon as he was outside of the wood again.

In about an hour he was back and paid me the money.

“Now,” he said, “you and me’s quits.”

He said it with such evident enjoyment, that I was not sorry to have the chance of the last word.

“I’m but a young man——” I said.

“Ye are that,” he added, “and have a lot to learn—a terrible lot.”

“And ye’re an auld ane.”

“No sae auld,” he muttered, rubbing his hands.

“So ye’ll maybe not tak’ the advice in as guid spirit as it’s given, but, all the same, I would advise ye to tak’ some ducks and drakes out tae the farm with ye.”

“Ay,” said he carelessly, “and what for that?”

“Because,” said I, “the bit burn, with the last three nichts’ rain, has burst down the south bank, and I’m a wee feared the low meadow will be mair use as a pond than as a field for a guid wheen years tae come.

“But dinna be downcast, man,” I said, as he strode to and fro, cursing. “Look at the scenery ye’ll have the advantage o’. It’s no everybody that can brag o’ a natural lake on their estate.”

CHAPTER III.

I MEET IN WITH JOCK HAY.

I THOUGHT little of leaving the house where I was born and bred. It is only after a while that the memory of hameland comes back and takes a grip of one's heart.

At that time I little kent that I would dream at nights of that stony knowe which I had dug and planted for so many years with much sweat and labour. Yet so it came, and the memory was none the less bitter when I thought on how carelessly I had left it. We dream on what's to come with great sweetness and underrate what we have. The future has aye the soft side of us, and the present the hard thoughts. Not until we gather sense does the future appear in its proper light, and that is what some call contentment.

So I went about my business, burdened with none of these thoughts, but only sad when my mind turned to thinking of my mother.

I got me a good plain suit of hodden grey and a broad blue bonnet with no feather nor badge as would suit my future station. Much anxiousness was caused me with regard to how I was to get a sure convoy to Anstruther with my money.

The roads were safer than they used to be ; but even at that, none so safe for a single traveller. I was ill inclined to risk any mischance when all I possessed was on me. Jean Gilbert, the wife who kept the house for the lodging for man and beast, helped me out of my predicament by telling me of a lift of lead that was to be made from the mines to Leith on the next day.

“ But,” I said to her, “ there was ane harried no so long ago, and the horses, lead, and all, stolen by some of the border men.”

“ Ay,” she said, “ but they’ll no try that trick on again. Scotch folk can be caught sleepin’ ance, but no twice. They have made up the convoy to twalve men now, and nae scaith of pistols and swords among them. Jock Hay, himsel’ the leader, has been a trooper in his time. Na, na, Duras, if ye can slip in among

them ye'll be as safe as if ye were in yer ain hoose."

"And what time do ye expect them to be here, Jean?"

"About noonday. They'll stop here for a bit o' dinner, an' gif ye be about, I'll pit ye in the way o' kenning Jock."

I thought I could not do better than take the wife's advice, so went home and spent the evening craftily sewing up my money in the packing of my saddle, and such like.

I rode down next day to Jean's, but there was no sign of the convoy. An hour, two hours passed, and at length they made their appearance. Instantly there was a great clamour of horses' hoofs outside of the house, and, inside, an accompanying clash of delf, but, above all, Jock Hay's voice rang out :

"Now, ye dolted knave, Rab Lourie, get your pack shifted and tak' the mare down to the smiddy and get shod. Hurry, man, hurry ; if ye're no back within the half-hour I'll break your neck across my knee."

The man led off the horse sulkily and Jock came in.

“As fast as ye can, Jean, now, for we maun be off in half an hour.”

“What’s kept ye, Jock?”

“Ye may weel ask, Jean; did anybody ever hear the like o’ a man starting on a long tramp like ours and never giving a look to his horse’s shoes? The consequence was, we hadna gone four miles when she dropped a shoe and went lame soon after. We should have been ten miles further on than this.”

“Where are ye pittin’ up for the nicht, Jock?”

“At Kaldar, Jean.”

“Lod, it’ll be dark afore ye get there.”

“Dark! it’ll be dark before we get half-way,” said Jock, as with a final outburst of oaths he began his dinner.

After his hunger was appeased, Jean said:

“This is Maister Duras, Jock. He would like a convoy till Leith with ye.”

“Happy to have ye, sir,” said Jock, “if ye can put up with our slow pace. But are ye ready? for here’s my man coming up the street, and I maun be off. Come on, then, and saddle your nag.”

As we went out the man, Rab Lourie, whose carelessness had caused the delay, came in at the door; Jock stopped him.

“ Ay, and where will ye be going ? ”

“ For my dinner,” said the man.

“ Just turn about the way ye came, my bonnie mannie,” said Jock, “ and if ye wadna come to a close friendship with my niece, get the pack on yer horse as tho’ the devil was working ye.”

The man grumbled that he had as good a right to his dinner as Jock, and did not stir.

“ D’ye hear me ? ” said Jock, quietly.

“ I want my dinner,” said the man, dourly.

Instantly Jock’s hand flew out, and grasped the man round the throat. He struggled a bit, but, being a small, thin man, had little chance against the gigantic Jock, to whose height even I, who am above the generality of my fellows, have to look up. Jock shook him backwards and forwards till the man was nearly choked, and never a cry did Rab Lourie make, but all the time he glared at Jock with a devilish malice.

Jock heeded it not a whit, but, when he thought the man had had his lesson, cast him off.

“Now, Rab Lourie, just let me hear another word from you on this side of the earth about dinner or anything else, and I vow to God I’ll grind your head into flour with my heel.”

“A heavy hand you’ve got, Jock Hay,” I said, as we rode on.

“And a heavy hand I need, Duras.”

“How, are they such a bad lot?”

“They’re neither better nor worse than the ordinary,” said Jock, “but there’s no discipline among them. And discipline is a thing they’ve got to learn, if I officer them.”

“Have ye ever tried kindness?” I said.

“I have,” said Jock, shortly.

I waited for him to say something more, but as he kept silent :

I asked, “And what was the result?”

“The result of kindness was a broken head for me, and the result of that broken head was twa sick men. No, kindness will do for maids, but not for men. It’s best as a luxury.”

“They seem a sturdy crew,” I said, looking

back at the ten men each with a pistol in his belt, and a whinger by his side.

“They’re all that,” said Jock, with an air of doubt.

“Ye don’t seem pleased,” I said. “D’ye not think they’ll stand fire?”

“Ye’ve just hit the point, Duras,” said Jock. “There’s no saying what they’ll do. They havena been baptised yet with bluid. They’re dour and sturdy enough when they’re wakened up, but I fear me they’ll be like a flock of sheep if they’re taken sudden; if ane runs, the rest will follow. If ane fights, I’m no feared for them.”

“But they will have you to set an example, Jock.”

“That’s what I’m counting on, Duras,” he said.

CHAPTER IV.

TREACHERY AND TORTURE AT THE FORD.

THE weather was none so bad as long as we were in the lowland, but, when we began to ascend, a blather of wind and rain met us full in the face.

The cheery song behind us came to a sudden close. The men had been stepping alongside their horses with a livesome spring, but now they settled themselves down to a dour gait.

Ere we came to the watering place the day had begun to creep in, and there was barely light enough to see a man's face at twenty paces. Two bits of wandering bodies were trying to light a fire near the ford, but the wind and rain soon put an end to their attempts, and, when we stopped, they came among us and began to beg piteously for something to eat.

“Hurry with the horses now, lads. Just

give them a bit taste o' the water, and away we go again," cried Jock, as he and I dismounted and walked to and fro to stretch our cramped legs.

Two horsemen from Leith way rode up to the ford, and began to water their horses also.

"There's beginning to get over much company for my taste," said Jock to me. "We'll just go back to our horses, Duras."

He began to walk back, and just got among them, when of a sudden out flashed the two horsemen's swords. They gave a shout as they drew them, and, as if in answer to their call, the two wandering bodies each drew a pistol from his clothes and fired. One of our men dropped to rise no more. The horses at the noise of the shots reared and plunged. The attack was sudden, and for the instant all was confusion.

Our men began to recover themselves, and Jock Hay's sword was out, when round the corner at full racing speed came four horsemen. Yelling like demons, they charged in among us, and fired their pistols. The already frightened horses grew mad from fear and broke from the

men. Jock Hay sprang to where his horse was, and was nearly in the saddle of the restless brute when Rab Lourie from behind struck him on the head with his cudgel. With a grunt Jock Hay fell with his face to the ground. His horse reared high into the air as Rab Lourie tried to mount him.

Up to this instant I had stood motionless as one in a dream, but the treachery of Jock's fall brought the blood back into my heart. I ran to where Lourie was mounting, and tore him from the saddle as the maddened beast broke away riderless.

With the man still in my arms I turned to look at the fight, when a sudden movement of Lourie brought me to a sense of my foolishness. I had just time to drop and strike him to the earth with my nieve ere a dagger glinted harmlessly across my breast.

And that was the last blow of the raid. Away up the hill I could hear the shouting of the men and the skelps of their swords on the beasts' backs as they hurried them forward, and even that died away as I listened.

Near me our men stood motionless looking

at the body of their dead comrade, some with their whingers out, others with them only half drawn, and one with a smoking pistol in his hand. As if in an evil dream of the night, when reason and volition are arrested, they stood and gazed at the dead body. Then one shuddered and let his whinger fall on the stones. At the clatter the spell was broken, and the men crept in a body together whispering.

Of all our horses and their loads not one remained.

I went to the help of Jock Hay, but he had recovered, and was sitting up looking at the scene wonderingly. His eyes turned this way and that as if in search of his precious charge, then they fell on the dead body, and the whole truth came to him. With a groan he turned himself away, and sunk his head into his arms.

“Come, Jock, rouse yourself,” I said to him, putting a hand on his shoulder. He was sobbing like a child, and I wondered at him.

“Is he—is he dead?” he asked, but without a tone of hope in his voice, for even the mirk

was sufficiently light to show the fatal dark spot on the brow of the pale upturned face.

I went to the body to make sure, but the heart had ceased to beat.

“Ay, he is, Jock,” I said.

“And I’ve to tell his mither, and his sister—her I was to marry the morn. Oh, but it’s braw news I bring to my wedding,” he moaned.

“‘Don’t let him come to harm, Jock, for he’s my only ane,’ was what the mither said. ‘He’ll come to nae scaith with me, mistress,’ I said.”

“Rouse yourself, Jock, man,” I cried.

“And now he’s dead,” said Jock.

“Rouse yourself, man.”

“Dead !” he cried again, helplessly.

“Ye canna help that,” I said.

“Dead !” he muttered again, as though I had not spoken. “And I’ve to tell his mither.”

“And will ye tell her that ye let his murderer go unharmed, Jock Hay ?” I cried to rouse him. “Will ye tell her that ye lay and grat while he rode off unskaited ! There’s that to look to yet.”

He lay still for a moment, his breath in-

drawing in long sobs; then he rose, quiet and determined.

“Ye’re richt, Duras, there’s that to look to yet.”

He tried to walk towards the men, but staggered so hopelessly that he was compelled to sit down on the grass.

“This clout on the head has made me weanly,” he muttered in apology of his weakness. “Oh, let me think,” he added, taking hold of his hair with both hands and staring into the night.

“What’s that moving?” he cried, as his sharp eyes caught something that mine missed.

“It’ll be Rab Lourie,” I said.

“Catch him, lads!” Jock cried to the men, and at the cry the figure that was barely to be seen creeping rose, and began to run. But the blow of my fist must have been no light one, for the men easily overtook Lourie, and brought him back to where Jock sat thinking.

“This is an evil turn ye’ve played on me, Rab Lourie,” said Jock, without heat, even absently, as though his mind was full of something else.

“Aye, ane’s in need o’ a lang spoon when he sups wi’ the deil,” said Rab Lourie, recklessly, for the men’s murderous faces gave him little hope of coming off with his life.

At his words the men turned, and would have rent him limb from limb had not Jock restrained them.

“Let him be, lads, let him be; and oh, let me have quiet to think, for the time’s short.” He sat silent for a minute, then he rose, and his face was hard set.

“Rab Lourie, God have mercy on your soul this nicht. By your treachery ye have cost us a life o’ a bonny lad, and all our goods. Your life’s no sufficient to pay for the bluid that’s been spilt. Traitor ance, ye can be traitor twice. Ye have betrayed us, and, by God ! ye shall betray them.”

“Ay,” said Rab Lourie, “and how will ye manage that ? ”

“Ye’ve said that ane needs a lang spoon when he sups with the deil, Rab. Weel, I’ve got a haud o’ that same spoon, and good-bye to conscience,” said Jock Hay. “Have ye bound him weel, lads ? ”

“We have that, Jock.”

“Robin, Allan, and Delap, tak’ him round the corner beyond the hill, and——” Jock whispered the rest into their ears, so that I could not hear. But I saw the men start back from him, only to settle down again as he said some other words that brought back the look of fury to their generally stolid faces. When he had finished they turned to Lourie, and, lifting him with small tenderness, disappeared into the darkness.

Jock stood with his arm on my shoulder as we waited. There was no talk among the men, and only the wind in gusty swirls broke the silence. For a minute or two it was thus, and then a cry as from a soul in torment came to my ears. The cry was succeeded by another, and then a third. I shuddered to my very marrow, and the men around me flung their hands to their ears. Only Jock stood unmoved.

“For God’s sake, what is it, Jock?”

A cry more piteous than the rest was my only answer, and then silence.

“What is it, Jock, what is it?” I cried, for the sound had driven terror into my heart.

“Persuasion,” was his answer.

The three men came back, bearing a limp body in their arms whose white face was scarce so pale as theirs.

“Did he tell?” cried Jock.

The man who answered wet his lips with his tongue and tried to answer, but could not.

“Here,” said Jock, thrusting a bottle of spirits into his hand. The man took a long drink.

“Did he tell?” said Jock, impatiently.

“He did,” said the man.

“And what road were they to tak’?” asked Jock.

“They were to go up the road till they came to three miles ayont this; then they were to tak’ the hill track till they joined the main road between Moins and Peebles.”

“As I thought!” cried Jock. “Then we have a chance. Now, lads, who’ll follow me to revenge themselves on the loss of a comrade, and win back our gear and horse forbye? I want nane that are no willing, but if but three of ye will come, I’ll risk it. Duras, ye’ll come?” he added.

“Certainly,” I said; for if I did not recover my horse and saddle, and that which was in the saddle, I had but a weary lookout.

One by one the men joined us, not enthusiastically, but with a settled dourness that was better.

“Well done, lads !” cried Jock. “Now, follow me, and if ye ever walked well in your life, walk better now.”

CHAPTER V.

WE LIE IN WAIT FOR THE BORDERERS.

“WHAT sort of plan have you in your mind, Jock ?” I asked, as we got under weigh.

“Let me settle it out first, Duras, and then I’ll tell ye. I’ve only got a darklin’ o’t yet; and oh ! but my brain’s thick with the clout I got. Peg in, lads, peg in; it’s a dreary road and rough we have to travel, but, by God’s help, we’ll win to its end.”

A dreary road and rough it was in all conscience. At first it was tolerable, and we took it at a quick swing. Then the track narrowed, and Jock led the way; then it lost all semblance to even a track, widening out into a grievous morass, with here and there a firmer portion.

The night got dark, the wind and rain battered in our faces till we scarce could face it, even for a moment. Out from the clouds at

intervals came a white blinding flash of lightning, with no thunder that we could hear.

Through it all Jock Hay held on at a good pace, picking his way when choice was possible, and when not, clearing the obstruction with an energy that sorely tried us to equal. After him we went in gallant style until we wearied and were heart-sick. With faces beaten down by the wind and rain, it soon became a mere blind follow-my-leader, each man only raising his head far enough to see the back of the one in front.

A great pain arose in my side. At every breath I felt a knife run through and through me. I lost all wish to regain horse and money, even the thought to have revenge for the murder of the man failed to rouse me. Only a great desire to lay me down and sleep was awake in me. The luxury of even a minute's rest was a thing to be desired above all.

The pain in my breast grew intolerable. Struggling along next to Jock, I felt as if my next step would be my last. Again and again I was sure I could do no more, and again and

again did the power of Jock's example spur me.

Well I knew that if I dropped out, many there would be who would quickly follow my example.

I could not desert him—but would he never stop? His breath came in great gasps, and his right hand was pressed into his side, but still he held on. During one of the flashes I turned my head to see how the rest of the men held out. In like plight as mine own they were, but struggling bravely. The glitter of a knife caught my eye, as one of the men pricked Rab Lourie in the thigh to urge him to more speed. The flash died out, and I turned again to the racking struggle.

We came to the head of the hill, and, oh! but it was a relief to let ourselves slide and shuffle downward, never having to lift a leg above a foot from the ground.

I had no breath to spare, but the pain had ceased in my side, and a great dam of warm blood seemed to have been released and sent coursing through my veins. I felt as if I could follow Jock's back anywhere: and I was soon

to be tried, for in one of the fitful flashes I saw it plainly, but in the next it had disappeared, and a great gulf loomed dark beneath my feet. I gave a shout of warning to the men behind, and threw myself flat on the ground, for the abyss seemed to suck me into it.

“Come on, Duras,” I heard Jock’s voice call from underneath me. “Let yourself slide on your belly, and cling to the turf and stanes. Slide, man !”

“But where, Jock ?” I cried.

A great shout of laughter came from below, and I heard Jock say, as if to himself :

“Duras is a coward after all. Maun I go up and show him the way again ?”

I turned on my face, edged my feet over the side, and giving my soul back to God, let myself slide. I was not urged by courage, but only by prudence driven out by the taunt.

The descent was more quick than pleasant. Not that it seemed quick, for what with rocks butting me in the midriff, and my head like a bell with separate and numerous stones for tongue, an eternity appeared to scrape by me. Then I felt my legs jut into space, and giving

myself up for a dead man I lost all thought save for the idea of the crash that was to be my knell.

A great hand came down on my back with a hearty clash.

"Let yourself drop, man, it's no four feet deep! Oh, Duras, but I'm glad to see ye," Jock added, as I gained my feet.

"So am I, Jock Hay," I managed to gasp out, for the wind was well-nigh driven from me. "For there are some words atween me and you that'll need a blood-letting to explain."

"Ay," said Jock, drolly, "and what'll they be?"

"Coward and Duras," I said.

"Tits, Duras," said Jock, putting his arm round my shoulders. "It was just a ruse to get ye here the quicker. I kent that there never was a Duras called a coward, but that he would go through hell to get an explanation. Well, ye couldna get an explanation without coming down here. So I called 'coward,' and here ye are. Is that not good logic? However, if it's no sufficient, I'm the last man on earth to seek to get out by a peaceable gate

if a bit play with the swords would be mair agreeable to ye."

"No, no, Jock," I said. "If ye're sure that was all it need go no further."

"Well and good," said Jock, "for we have little time to spare. Come on now, lads, we'll catch ye. Just keep yourselves from rolling, and ye're right as a trivet!"

One by one the men joined us with much grumbling at their bruises, and, what pleased me better, deep vows to pay back tenfold on the Borderers what they had caused them to suffer.

Rab Lourie had been sent down the slope first, and while the rest descended Jock had been attending to him.

All Lourie's recklessness had fled, and only a hideous dread filled his eyes, intensified by the forked lightning that now burst from the heavens with accompanying peals of thunder.

I looked round to gain some idea of where we were. We had rolled down into a deep gut in the hill. Above us the hill rose bare, but, at the foot where we stood, was a fringe of trees. On the other side of the trees, the hill rose

sharply again, and, between the two, an ill-defined road ran.

“Is this a part of the hill track ye spoke of, Jock?” I asked.

“It is, Duras, and they maun pass through here. Now, lads, put dry priming into your pistols, and reload them.”

“Have you a pistol, Duras?”

“I have, Jock,” I said.

“Oh, it’s ane o’ the auld kind, is it? We have not time to wait, nor means to light the match, so tak’ ane o’ mine with the wheel-lock, and while you’re doing that, lads, I’ll explain a little plan I have formed—wi’ the help of our friend Rab here.”

Lourie gave a deep groan at the words, and Jock turned to him with a fierce oath.

“And look to it, Rab Lourie, that ye dinna depart ae word from what I’ve told ye, or by the Lord it’s not one death ye’ll suffer, but a thousand. A dagger in your false heart would be an easy death, but thinkna that ye’ll be let off so cheap as that if ye betray us in this.

“Now, lads, my plan is this : the horses will be wearied with their quick burst, and so will

be going slow, but not slow enough to mak' your aim certain. If we could win some way of halting them, and taking them unawares, it would be better. Whist, whist !" said Jock, suddenly. " What's that ? "

The noise of a horse slipping on stones came to our ears.

" In under the trees, lads, and keep quiet till I fire !" said Jock. " Each select his man, and, oh, mak' certain o' him ! When I fire, all o' ye fire, then forward with your whingers out, and strike gin ye be men, and double strike for the sake o' him whose mither will mourn him sae sair."

We ran in under the trees that adjoined the track, and Jock, picking Lourie up in his arms, went a little further on, and there lay down.

CHAPTER VI.

WE TAK' BACK OUR AIN, OR TIT FOR TAT.

THE storm above us still increased. Flash after flash made the night almost as bright as the day. The rain came down in torrents, but the wind had died away. The clash-clash, as the heavy drops whipped the earth, and the roar of the thunder made the drums of my ears birl, as I listened eagerly for a sign of the Borderers' approach.

Almost as soon as I heard the noise of their horses' hoofs, I caught a momentary glimpse of them. The beasts they rode or led seemed tired and fettleless after their quick outburst, and plodded along the rough path sullenly. The men themselves were riding at their ease, and in great spirits. A continual laugh seemed to be with them, as with merry jest and prank they came opposite to where we were stationed.

Of a sudden the cry of a hawk, thrice

repeated in rapid succession, broke out above the tumult of the storm. The Borderers drew rein, and glanced at each other in bewilderment. Then the leader threw up his hand to enjoin silence, and from among them a single answering whoop came. Again the other cry resounded from under the trees.

“Who’s there?” cried the leader of the Borderers.

“Rab Lourie,” came back the reply.

The men at the name relaxed their strained attitudes, and the leader asked with a great oath :

“Why do you not come to us, then?”

“I canna,” cried Lourie; “I’ve strained my foot in tumbling doon this dagont gut. Come and set me up on a horse, for God’s sake!”

The men gathered close together, and I heard one of them say :

“Leave the bastard where he is. He’s none of us, and if we bring him, it means so much less among the rest.”

“Ay, but,” said their leader, “he might come in useful again. Besides, if we left him here, he might round on us and do us a mischief.”

“Leave him here,” said the first; “there’s few folks pass this way. There’s little chance of his ever living long enough to do us a mischief, that is if he’s as bad as he says.”

“Come on,” cried Rab Lourie, “ye wouldna desert a man like this !”

“We micht as well see for ourselves what he’s like,” said the leader. “If he’s so bad, then he’ll be waur; if he’s capable of moving, then we maun tak’ him wi’ us.”

In a body they advanced closer to where the noise had come from, and in doing so came alongside us till they were within ten paces of the trees.

“Are ye there, Rab ?” cried the leader, halting, and his men doing likewise.

“Now, lads !” cried Jock Hay’s voice in reply, accompanied by the report of his pistol.

I just caught a glimpse of the leader falling from his saddle, ere I took my own aim and fired at the second man. On either hand of me the pistols of our men went off, as I rushed out into the open, sword in hand.

My opponent had drawn his sword, and was

unharméd. I went towards him, and coming level with his horse, hit it with my weapon over the nostrils. The rider struck at me, but, his horse rearing, his blow passed over my head.

The fever of fighting was upon me as I rushed in and drove my sword upward with my whole strength. It pierced him in the side, and buried itself for a foot or so in his body. He gave a short, sharp gasp; then, with a hiccough, fell limply towards me. I freed my weapon, and pulled him from the saddle. Mounting hurriedly the rearing horse, I seized the reins, but felt them slip in my hands. A warm, slimy substance was on my fingers and palm, and I cleansed them on the horse's mane. Not till long afterwards did I think that it was blood that was on my hands—and my first blood, too.

In the gleams of the lightning the fight appeared like a series of jerky scenes. At one moment I saw three men surround a horseman, who was laying about him gaily; then darkness, and at the next I saw an empty saddle, and one of our men climbing therein.

In like manner was my next encounter. During a spell of darkness a horse drove up against me. I felt the whizz of a blade by my side. Then the light came, and I only raised a guard in time to save my head, as the Borderer ran his horse past me. Wheeling round my beast, I made after him. In a few yards I was alongside of him and had raised my blade to strike, when the light died out. My horse swerved from the other, and though ignorant of the path, in my fury I urged him on. Leaning over the bow of my saddle, I tried to descry my man; but with eyes dazzled by the former light, I might as well have looked into the pit itself.

Then a sharp gleam came, and I saw him three lengths in front of me. I pricked my horse to renewed effort, and with a desperate bound the willing animal tried to answer me. I felt myself getting near; in another bound I touched his horse's haunches with my hand. I raised my sword. Would the light never come? My horse's head hung heavy on my hand; I felt him stagger beneath me. Would I wait for the light and make sure work,

running the risk of being outpaced, or would I strike in the dark ?

Another stumble of my mount decided me. I lifted him onwards for a pace or two, then struck, throwing all my might into the blow.

A slight resistance met my blade, and then came a stronger that jarred and strained my wrist fearfully.

I pulled my sword in to me, and it became free.

The light came at last, and far in front, relieved of a weight, a riderless horse ran wild. I looked down at the horse I bestrode, and found it was my own nag, that had been taken from me in the raid. With fingers, urged only by a hesitating and dreading will, I threw myself to one side in the saddle and felt under the other for the precious packing. Thank Heaven, it was there ! and with a light heart I rode back to where the assault had commenced.

The fight was over, and, as if in response to the human peace, the storm began to subside.

“ How has the fight gone, Jock ? ” I cried to him.

“ Grandly, man, grandly ! ” he replied,

joyously; "on our side, three wounded, none seriously. On theirs, four dead and four escaped."

"And the lead, Jock, and horses?"

"They're all recovered—see over there! That's the men tightening the girths for a new start; but the journey will be a slow one, I sair misdoubt, for the horses have been bucketed shamefully."

I caught sight for a moment of the men, with whingers sheathed, going quietly about their business—sorting a pack there, quieting a horse here—and I could scarcely believe the scene of bloody fray had been transformed so soon into one of peace and industry.

I looked to where I had met my first opponent, and thought I saw a figure creeping; but the light was so fitful and sudden, that I could not make sure. However, my doubts were removed by the next flash, for the man rose painfully to his feet and lurched forward for a few yards, then fell. I argued in my mind whether I should tell Jock of this or not, but at length determined to give the man his chance. Enough killing had been done already. A

reaction from my fury had come to me, and I shuddered at the thought of more blood being shed.

When the next gleam lighted up the scene I saw that the man had been creeping steadily onward to the point where Jock and Lourie had lain when the Borderers had come to them, and I wondered slightly why he did not choose the covert close to his right hand rather than toil towards that other point. The next flash was long in coming and the poor fellow had nearly reached the trees. And none too soon, for scarcely could he move more than a foot at a time, despite his enormous exertions. Ere the darkness again fell a wild cry rang out into the air.

“What’s that, Jock?” I cried. “It comes from away on your right hand. Did you have anybody there?”

“Rab Lourie!” Jock cried back to me. “What can be wrong with him?”

What proved to be the tail of the storm came in the shape of a long gleam of white light, enduring for as long as the heart could beat twenty times.

I saw the man rise to his feet and take three steps to where Lourie lay bound hand and foot. Lourie's face, upturned, was fixed in the grip of a great terror. I would have rushed to his help had not Jock held me in a firm embrace.

"Steady, lad!" he cried in my ear.

The man had reached Lourie and took a dagger from his belt. A shrill squeal came from Lourie's lips, like a rabbit's cry when the weasel springs.

The man staggered and fell on the top of Lourie, and I thought death had come to him sooner than his revenge; but I was mistaken, for three times he raised the dagger, and three times he drove it into Lourie's heart. Then all again was darkness.

"And so die all traitors!" roared Jock Hay's voice, but with a sob at the end of it that told how much even his heart had been tried by the awful scene.

CHAPTER VII.

JOCK HAY GETS MY AID IN A PAINFUL BUSINESS.

NEXT morning I awoke sore and stiff in all my bones. Fain would I have turned round in my bed and gone to sleep again, but Jock Hay came into my chamber and said my desire nay.

“ Well, Duras, how’s all wi’ ye this morning ? ” he asked.

“ But middling, Jock, ” I answered; “ I feel mair like a basted hen than an ordinary mortal. Ye dinna look very pleased yersel’.”

“ Pleased ? ” cried he. “ Little cause have I to be pleased. Oh, but it’s a bonnie marriage morning this for me ! Bonnie, bonnie news I bring for a fairing to my sweetheart ! The best are taken and mithers mourn—for the matter of that, it wouldna matter though if it had been the worst, mithers would have mourned

as sair. But for him—him, the brightest, livesomest lad—to be doomed at his best is mair than I can stand.”

“Jock, Jock, ye must quiet yersel’ a bit,” I said. “To a man like you, death shouldna come a stranger till you or your comrades. You must not tak’ on sae sair about it. Could ye have helped it, then ye might well mourn uncomforted, but this was no fault of yours.”

“I should have guarded against it !” cried Jock. “I’ve failed in my trust to his mither !”

“Had ye been Providence, Jock,” I said, “ye might have prevented it, but not unless.”

“It’s easy for you to speak, Duras, but ye have not to face a woman who asks for her son—a sister who asks for her brother. I have to say till them, ‘I’m sorry; but he’s dead. It was no fault of mine.’ ‘And where were ye?’ they would ask. ‘Standing, looking on,’ would be all that I could say. No, no, Duras, it’s easy for you to try and comfort me by saying it was no fault of mine, but ye have not to face them who mourn. Do you think that they, fair wild with the loss of their lad, would hearken to me ?”

"I would mak' them, Jock," I said. "The dead we canna help, though we can be sair-hearted at their death; but the living deserve some aid."

"It's little thocht they'll give to the living," said Jock, mournfully.

"And that's what ye want to change, Jock?" I answered. "As I tak' it, ye think this mischance will tak' your wife that was to be away from ye. Weel, to avoid that, above all dinna let them brood for a moment on the idea that ye should have saved him, or ye're a lost man; for if a woman once gets an idea into her head, it requires mair than mortal power to get it out."

"The theory's guid enough, Duras," said Jock, hopelessly; "but how to win at it is mair than I ken. Now, if some ane like you would bide wi' me and speak up for me, they might listen."

"D'ye mean ye would like my company, Jock?" I asked, rather ruefully; for, like all men, I dread a scene.

"Of course, that's rather much to ask, Duras," said Jock, meekly; "but it's what I'd like."

“If ye think it would do any good, Jock?” I said, hesitatingly.

“All the good in the world, man,” cried Jock; “for, tho’ I say it myself, I’m naturally tongue-tied if I’ve to shout my ain praises. Aside a bit lass, and alone, it’s different of course, but I ken fine that in a case like this I would have no more speech than a stuck pig. For man’s anger I don’t care a damn, but a woman’s tears mak’ me as weakly as a bairn.”

“Then I’ll come, Jock,” I said.

“Oh, man, Duras,” said Jock, his face losing its sad look and becoming radiant for a moment, “I liked ye fine to start with, and ye’ve grown on me, till now I love ye like a brither;” and he gave me a hug that well-nigh cracked my ribs.

“Ca’ canny, Jock,” I cried, “ye’re no over tender to your brither, if this is a sample of your love.”

In a little our horses were brought round, and we took the road once more, minus three men. One of these had to lie in Kaldar on account of his wound, which was more inconveniently placed than serious; the other

two had gone back to bring the body of the dead man, Walter Andrews, home to his mother's house.

We were but a silent company. Now and again one of the men would try a jest in a moment of light-heartedness; but so little laughter was the result, that it only seemed to intensify the sadness. We sorely missed the merry song that the lad had raised on the preceding day, with a lilt of gladness and life in it that had been wonderfully enlivening.

We passed by Edinburgh at noonday; and without stopping anywhere, except once to bait the horses, we arrived at Leith well on in the afternoon.

Jock delivered his charge over to the servants of Foulis, the silversmith, and left the story to be told by the men. We stabled our horses, and walked quickly to the house where the Andrews stayed. As we drew near Jock's pace slackened, and once indeed he fairly halted, without caring even to disguise his quivering mouth.

"The Lord help me," he muttered.

"Amen, Jock," I said, "but let us get it over."

We mounted the stairs and entered the house. Mother and daughter rose from the seat at the window, and Mirren, the daughter, came up to Jock with a shy, winsome manner that took my heart. She gave the least bit glance at me askance, then crept to his side, and held up her mouth to be kissed. Jock bent his head to the salute, then suddenly straightened himself up and gently put her from him.

“Ye ken, Mirren,” he said, in a hoarse, strained voice, “how I longed for that same kiss, but there is something to be said afore I can tak’ it freely.”

“Jock, Jock,” said Mirren, “what’s wrong?”

“I took your son from you, Mistress Andrews,” said Jock slowly, then paused.

“Ye did, Jock,” said she; “have ye ta’en guid care o’ him?—for he’s my only ane, and I’m a widow.”

“I took your son from ye,” said Jock again; then stopped and cried to me, “Tell her, Duras; I cannot.”

I began to speak, but the mother rose up from her seat and interrupted me.

“Your pardon, sir, but I kenna ye. It’s with Jock Hay I have to deal. He it was who took him from me with fair promises, and he it is from whom I ask an account. Jock Hay, what have ye done with my son ?”

Jock bent his head for a moment, then looked her in the face.

“Mistress Andrews, I took your son from ye, and God has taken him from me.”

“Dead !” she cried, standing stiffly on her feet.

“Dead,” said Jock, quietly.

She raised both her hands to her eyes, and seemed to clear a mist from them, then her face hardened as I never thought such a sweet face could.

“Jock Hay, ye have ta’en from me that which was dearest, and broken your promises. For one pain of his may ye have one thousand, for his death may——”

“Oh, mither, mither, dinna curse him—for he *was* to be my husband this very nicht,” said Mirren, running to her and pressing the mother’s mouth to her breast.

For a moment they stood thus; then Mirren’s voice rang out with a great wail :

“ Oh, God, tak’ me too ! Brither and man to be lost in ae day ! Why am I left ? ”

Then her body was racked with dry, hard sobs, that were to be strangely disquieting.

“ Oh, wheesht ye; wheesht ye, my bairn,” crooned the mother, taking her daughter to her arms.

Jock stood with a stolid look on his face, quiet and firm, but his hands were closed and gripped so tight that the nails drew blood. At last he stepped forward.

“ Listen to me, Mirren, and you too, Mrs. Andrews. Baith of ye should ken weel that I would have gi’en my life for his ony day; and God do so to me, and more also, if I could have shielded his life at the expense of my own and did not.”

Mirren’s sobs abated a little, and the two women turned round to Jock and waited side by side for his next words.

“ Will ye hear how it happened ? ” he asked; and when they had bowed their heads in reply, he told them all.

When he had finished the mother sank into

a chair and buried her face in her hands, but never a sob came from her.

“Now, Mirren,” said Jock, “I have told you all. Richt weel ye ken how I love ye; but if what has happened would mak’ the sight of me a sorrow ever after till ye, say the word, and Scotland disna hold me after the morn. I loved him baith for your sake and his ain. If ye love me still, and can forgive me of ought that I am to blame in, come to me, for not one foot will I stir to coax you in your swither.”

The maid’s eyes were blinded with tears as she took a look at her mother, then made one feeble, blind step in Jock’s direction.

And he broke through his resolution at once, for at that faint sign Jock took two quick steps to her, and clasped her in his arms.

“Thank God !” I heard him mutter, as I turned my back to them.

When I looked round again, Jock had knelt at Mrs. Andrews’ feet, and the maid with him.

“Oh, mither, listen till him,” said the maid, softly.

“Mistress Andrews, I made ye a promise—a promise I tried to keep; but God keeps the

ruling in His ain hands. Doubt na that Walter is ta'en to fill a higher place than what earth could have offered him. In a manner, I have cost ye the life of your son, but in its place I offer ye my own. Let me be as a son to ye."

"Oh, listen till him, mither!" again pleaded the daughter.

But the mother replied not.

"I ken I'll no fill his place in your heart," said Jock, "but, oh! I'll try hard. For the Lord's sake, be merciful, for my heart is as near breaking as your ain."

"Oh, answer, mither!" cried the maid.

She sat in the same unchanged position; her arms lying along the chair-arm, and her face resting on them. They waited in silence for a minute on her answer, but it came not, and then they came to know the reason of her silence.

Jock was wrong in saying his heart was as near broken as was hers, for the mother's heart had broken long before, and her soul had fled to rejoin her son's.

CHAPTER VIII.

A STORMY INTRODUCTION.

I WAS compelled to stay in Leith for three days, to follow to their burials the mother and son. It was a sad, weary time for all, and, oh ! but I pitied Jock Hay.

He came down to the quay-side to bid me farewell a little while before the boat sailed that was to take me to Anstruther.

“ Oh ! man, Duras,” he said, pressing my hand, “ ye’ve been a grand chance acquaintance to me, and sorry I am we maun twine.”

“ Nay, nay, Jock,” I said, as sorry as he, but more heartsome; “ the twining’s no for ever.”

“ It’s well seen you’re in your youth, lad,” he said : “ many’s the time I heard the same story—‘ It’s no for ever;’ but somehow the years drift by. Ye weary for the face, but wearying does not bring it the nearer. Syne ye tire of wearying. It’s a bad thing to wrestle

with time. Ye grip brave and bonnie at the first—but it's the finish that tells. Easy-osy, ye get laid on the braid of your back, and the turf grows green above your head."

"Hoots, Jock!" I cried, "it's a patient turf that waits till ye nourish it. What's all the outcry about?"

"No much, lad," said Jock; "no much to you, but a lot to me. Ye think that guid comrades are as plentiful as blackberries in summer—I ken how scarce they are."

"Weel, but, Jock, we'll see ane anither whiles," I said, heartily.

"Maybe, maybe, Duras," said Jock, doubtfully, "but one thing I would like ye to promise. If ever ye are in need of a friend who'll back ye up with purse (such as it is), sword, or life, will ye come to me?"

"And who else would I come to, Jock?" I cried.

"Seriously though, Duras?" Jock yelled, as the boat was being drawn out.

"Ay, seriously, Jock," I shouted in reply. "If ever I should be in need of such an one, I'll mind ye of your promise."

“And I’ll no need much minding,” were Jock’s last words.

There was nothing eventful happened on the voyage. Favoured with a south-easterly wind and a smooth sea, we drove pleasantly along, and ere night had sighted May Island.

When we arrived it was too late to go ashore, so I slept all night on board; and next morning, with my precious wallet heavier by the price of my horse which I had sold in Leith, I slipped on shore and began to make my way to Simon Carter’s house. Asking a man of the town the direction, I found that Simon Carter was well known, being a Bailie of Anstruther, and owner of the chief business in the Port, at the which I was somewhat discomposed; but, plucking up heart, I continued my way and got to the house.

It was a house of three stories, large and commodious, the lower part of which was used as the offices of his trade, and the upper as his dwelling-house.

Getting hold of one of the lads I asked for his master, and got for an answer that he was in the dwelling-house. So, entering by the

private door, I mounted the stairs and knocked. The maid-servant who answered showed me into the eating-room, where I found Simon Carter by himself. He was a little man and lean, with hair and beard that were showing more grey than black. The eyebrows were thick and straight over the piercing grey eyes, and what could be seen of his mouth through the beard was thin and determined.

He finished jotting down some figures in a book before he looked up; then he flung at me a quick glance, and said, sharply :

“ Well ? ”

This was not exactly encouraging, and added to what I saw of the man, it made me like him less and less. Some food was on the table before him; and before I had replied, he lifted up a knife and began to eat.

“ My name is David Duras,” I said.

He looked up from his meat with wrinkling brows, as though trying to recollect the name, then he said :

“ Well ? ”

My anger was rising rapidly, but I forced myself to continue.

“My father married a cousin of yours,” I said, shortly.

He continued eating for a little, then said :

“Did he ? What was her name ? ”

“Janet Ogilvie.”

“Oh, I ken ye noo,” he replied; “ye’ll be a son of Duras of that estate in Clydesdale. By that way o’t, we’ll be some kind o’ relation. Sit doon.”

I took one of the stools from under the table and sat down.

“Your father’s dead, I heard,” he said, munching steadily on. •

“Ay,” I replied.

“And how is your mother ? ” he asked, carelessly.

“She’s dead, too,” I said, shortly.

He looked up with the first sign of interest in his face since our meeting.

“Dead ! ” he said to himself, musingly, “Janet Ogilvie dead ? Poor lassie ! The folks envied her when she got Duras to wed, but there was little to envy in her catch. So ye’ll be heir to the Duras estate, young man, since ye’re the only child of the marriage I’ve heard of,” he added, continuing his meal.

“Ay,” I said; “but a small enough estate.”

“Ay,” he replied, “yer father made a sair hash o’t.”

I flushed up at this careless and cruel mention of my father, but went on steadily, keeping down my gorge :

“Ye’ll maybe no have mind o’t, Maister Carter, but on a visit to our house I was brought down to see ye ere ye started in the morning.”

“I have some recollection of a swatch of flannel being showed me till admire,” he said.

“Well,” I said, “ye probably have less recollection of anything that was said on that occasion.”

“I have mind of some hard words,” he said, “but what gave rise to them I canna say. Have they anything to do with this visit of yours ?”

“They have,” I replied, “for at that time ye advised my mother to put me till an honest trade. I’ve come to you to ask your help in that same.”

“Advice is cheap, Duras, but help is different.”

“I ken that,” I said.

“There’s some,” he went on, “that are prodigal with advice, and niggardly of help.”

“And the question is, Maister Carter,” I said, “are ye of them ?”

“And the answer is, Duras—it depends.”

“Depends on what ?” I asked.

“Depends on many a thing,” he said slowly. “First of all, ye asked me for help to get into an honest trade. Well, that means, to get into mine, flatly, for if ye arena guid enough for me, I’m no ane to pass ye off on my neighbour. Ye’ll agree wi’ me sae far ?”

“Ay,” I said.

“Now, the next question is—Are ye guid enough for me ?”

“And the answer to that, Maister Carter ?” I asked, as he paused.

“Is no sae easy, Duras,” he said. “Ye see, it’s like this. I would be glad to help a son of Janet Ogilvie’s, but I’m loth to saddle myself with ane I ken nothing about.”

“But, suppose I only ask ye to try me ?” I asked.

“Nay, nay, Duras,” he answered, “I ken these trials. They’re either mak’ a spoon or

spoil a horn. It's all very well if it's the former, but if it's the latter ye have the spoiled horn on your hands for ever after—and spoiled horns are a thing I have no use for. Now the next question to settle is—Are ye in a fair way to mak' a spoon? I ken nothing about yourself, but of your forbears I do to my cost."

"An' how'll that be, Maister Carter?" I asked, hotly.

"Your father borrowed money of me, and for Jane Ogilvie's sake I lent it."

"And got paid back?" I said.

"Ay," he replied, "but when? two months after date, and during those two months I would have given my promise to pay a pound for ten shillings of money in my hand. During those two months I worked heaven and earth to keep my nose above water. A time, David Duras, that I'll never forget, and ane that I'll be cautious never to lay myself open to again. Now, that being so, and judging ye by your forbears, Duras, am I entitled to think ye're different? Your father was a fool and——"

"What?" I cried.

"Your father was a fool," he went on.

“ I’ll allow no man to say that to his son ! ” I cried.

“ That disna mak’ him any lesser fool,” he said, quietly.

“ I warn ye, Maister Carter, that I’ll no stand any more of that,” I said, rising.

“ Ye’ve thrown yourself open to it,” he said, and went on as though I had not spoken, “ And so your father being a fool——”

“ By God, ye’ll repent these words ! ” I cried madly, catching up the stool, and raising it to fell him to the earth. He stood up too, holding the knife he had used for eating daggerwise in his hand.

“ Take those words back ! ” I panted, the stool quivering in my grasp.

“ They’re the truth,” he said, watching me like a cat.

I took one step forward, when the door opened and a vision of beauty appeared. A wee tiny figure of a maid of eighteen years, with luxuriant black hair and sweet rounded features, whose olive skin gave them character with a delicacy as of a rare cut cameo. She stood looking wonderingly at us. The stool

gradually sank with my nerveless arms, and Simon Carter let his knife fall on the table.

“This is my daughter, Duras,” he said quietly, as though nothing had happened. “Rose, this is your half-cousin, David Duras, who’ll bide with us a day or two, and who’ll maybe tak’ up his residence with us for guid. Give him welcome, Rose,” he said, as she stood motionless.

She came up to me, and as I bent to salute her cheek, she whispered in my ear :

“Kiss, but I’ll aye mind this against ye, Cousin David !”

CHAPTER IX.

MY COUSIN ROSE.

“Now,” I thought to myself, “this is the end of any hope of learning an honest trade with Simon Carter.”

I sat down on my stool and waited, taking stock of the father and the daughter. In every man's heart—no matter how much his exterior may make the fact seem improbable—there lies a reverence or a love. Hidden carefully, and guarded jealously, lest the touch of the commonplace may defile the sacredness, as it may be, now and again the watch is relaxed and the secret ideal breathes and lives in common with the man.

In Simon Carter's heart his daughter held chief place. One could read it in every action and look of the man; and plenty of time was given for the reading, for they were in no haste to terminate their whispering conversation.

Perched on the arm of her father's chair, Rose listened while he spoke. I could not hear the words, but judged them to be about myself from the frequent sidelong contemptuous glances the maid flung at me. They did not lend any happiness to my already miserable mind, but withal I could not find it in my heart to be angry with the maid. It was not an attitude that would tend to bring me into favour with her, this threatening of her father; and the less so, because she returned in full measure the great love her father bore her. Indeed, in my own mind, I could not think of a less favourable introduction. I sat steadily, enduring my fate and her glances. If I could not be tactful, I at least could be dour; but for pure, nerveless misery, I would be hard put to sit a half-hour of greater agony than that in which they talked and waited.

At last Simon Carter stopped of a sudden the whisper by saying aloud :

“ But, Rose, we're forgetting our guest.”

At this they both rose, and he added :

“ Perhaps Duras will take a bit of dinner with us.”

“Havena ye had yours, father?” cried Rose.

“In part only,” said Simon, with the vestige of a smile. “Ye see, it was interrupted a wee bit.”

I flushed dark at that, and said impulsively :

“Ye’ll perhaps allow me to mak’ the observe, Maister Carter, that I’m sorry for what has passed.”

“Hold your peace, lad,” Simon cried quickly, “and dinna lessen in my mind the only good I’ve seen in ye as yet.”

“Good !” cried Rose, flinging her nose into the air in an attitude which in others would have been vulgar, but which in her seemed only piquant.

“Ay, good, Rose,” said Simon to her, “for it’s good in a son to uphold his parent through good and ill report. And there’s no doubt, Duras, I was a bit hard on your father.”

I began to pluck up a little heart at this, for I saw that if he was severe he was just, and what he had said was, for him, an apology. I looked at Rose, thinking to see in her face a lightening of her displeasure to me, but I found it only the darker. Fool that I was, I might

have known that an apology drawn from her father would weigh a thousand times heavier in the balance of her feelings than a blink of happiness to me.

At dinner the talk was dreich enough till Rose, wearying of it doubtless, leaned across to me, and with what I thought a pretty assumption of knowledge, asked :

“ And what’ll be the price of wheat this year ? ”

“ Now,” thinks I, “ the cloud is lifting,” and so I answered in great good heart :

“ Eight pound the boll, and aitmeal the same, but ye can get corn at five. Dear, dear price it is, but nothing to what it has been in a worse year. Twelve years syne, the malt was selling at £10 the boll and aits at £12;” and I went on, with some spirit, to give her a statement of the dearest prices that I had heard of.

After the silence, the subject was enticing, and I went into it very minutely, encouraged by her attentive looks. But suddenly she gave a yawn behind her hand, and said to her father :

“ Eh, father, if the grain was as heavy in

the measure as the sermon, faith, but the folk would have weight at least for their money."

Simon gave a hearty laugh at this, quieting somewhat suddenly when he saw my downcast face.

"Never gie it a thought, man," he said. "They need a strong bow who'll draw a shaft with Rose."

"Ye'll have to excuse my pedantry, Mistress Rose," I said to her, with heart of grace, "for I'm of the country countrified."

"What," she cried, "do you mean to tell me that ye havena lived in the town?"

"Never," I said.

"I can hardly believe that," she replied, glancing at me in doubt. "Ye've made frequent visits to Edinburgh anyway, or ye never could carry yourself as ye do."

"I've never been twenty miles from home," I said, complacently.

"Man, man," she said, clicking her tongue in her mouth.

Simon started up from the table coughing violently, but with his shoulders heaving in a suspicious manner.

“A truce, Rose, a truce !” he cried. “And now let’s settle this business atween you and me, Duras.”

I glanced at Rose to see if she would leave the room, but she made no sign, and in answer to my look, Simon said :

“Rose is partner to all my business.”

“An ornamental partner,” I said, bowing to her.

She gave me a pretty courtesy in return, then went for a moment to the window.

“I have no secrets from her,” Simon said; and encouraged by my first effort, I thought I might do worse than try again.

“There’s nothing hidden from the angels,” I interjected, looking at her.

She stood with open mouth for a moment as if in amazement, then crying :

“My glory, father, I can stand this no longer !” made for the door. At the entrance she turned and said :

“Oh, father, I’m feart for my heart !”

I was busy considering how she meant this, when Simon, returning to his business tone, spoke :

"Now, Duras, let's consider about ye entering my trade. I want to pit things clearly before ye. If ye come to me, ye maun understand that our relationship and your auld family will count for nothing; rather against ye than for ye, for we'll expect all the more from ye."

"I'll bear the brunt of that, Maister Carter," I said.

"Good," he replied, "but ye should wait to hear what that means. For your mother's sake, I'll let ye skip the bottomnest rung of the ladder, and start ye in the office, though it'll be some time before ye're any guid."

"I'll tak' no man's charity if I can do without it, Maister Carter," I said. "What's the bottomnest step?"

"Porter's work," he replied. "That's where I began, little as ye would think it from the size of my body."

"Then there I'll start, too," I said, sturdily. "And learn from the beginning."

"Man, Duras, ye speak well," said Simon, doubtfully.

"Ay, and I'll do well, too," I replied. "I'm

no smart, I've no great knowledge, but I've got dourness in me. It's the only thing I can pride myself on, Maister Carter, and ye can rely on't."

"Well," he said, "if ye accept the conditions, Duras, we'll consider it settled."

"I thank you, Maister Carter," I replied, "and I'll try and give ye no reason to regret your kindness."

"One thing," he went on, "ye'll be different from the rest of your fellows in is, that ye'll eat with Rose and me. I think this your due, considering that we are relations. But, mind ye, it'll no serve to mak' ye the mair welcome among the men."

"I'll risk any discomfort," I replied, "in return for the privilege."

"Then, that's all settled," he said.

"But what about the money for apprenticeship?" I said.

"Nay, nay, Duras, there never was a question of that between us."

"But," I said, "it's the custom."

"Well, Duras," he replied, "ye maun just be content to depart from it."

“Then, I have a pickle siller here I would like to put in your hands,” I said to him.

“Nay, nay,” he replied, “put it in some other house. What I have, Duras, is all my own, and I would ill agree with other folks’ meddling.”

“But,” I said, “I would meddle nane.”

“Ye must let me have my own way in this, Duras,” Simon answered. “Folk say I’m a masterfu’ man, and I’ll no deny it. I have no pleasure in owning part of anything. What I own must be mine only. So just put your siller in the hands of some safe body—Johnston, the silversmith, for instance—and then come back and we’ll start ye at your honest trade.”

CHAPTER X.

I LISTEN TO HER HARP AND DREAM.

WHEN I look back on the first six months of my apprenticeship to Simon Carter, I wonder I won through them. Mine, indeed, was a curious predicament. During the hours of labour I toiled and sweated with the porters, living their life and mating with them, though it went sore against the grain for me to do so, for they were but a scurvy lot. At first among them there was a great to-do and outcry at my taking bread from a hungry man's mouth.

"Well," says I, "show me a man that's hungrier than I am, and more willing and able to labour, and I'll give up my job."

Thereat they produced some weedy quay loiterers, and so we set to work. The bargain was bale for me and bale for them, to be lifted from the deck and carried to the store. I gave little heed to them for the first hour, but at a

good pace I went on with my labours. Then I halted for a minute to see how they had got on. There were four of them started ; but two had disappeared, while of the other two, one was rubbing his shoulder sorrowfully, and the tails of his neighbour could just be seen vanishing round the corner.

“ Anything wrong ? ” I said to him—the one who remained.

“ Oh, nothing, nothing,” he said, slowly. “ I’m only sorry I started.”

“ Ay,” I said to him, swinging a bale to my shoulder, “ your other job suited ye best.”

After that the porters began to play sundry pranks upon me, and for a little I kept my temper lest I might gain a name for a rough man. But blocks dropping so near my head grew monotonous; and as I aye like Providence best unassisted, I took two of their heads in my hands and soundly cracked them together. After that the blocks remained in their proper positions.

One night three of them waylaid me in a quiet street, with the intention doubtless of breaking my head or worse. They brought

their cudgels with them for that purpose. My hands were empty, but I felled one of them to the earth with my fist, and took the loan of his club.

They were none so brisk at commencing the head-breaking after that, and when they did come on, it was pitiful to see their idea of singlestick. As it happened, I had been taught by auld Sandy Davidson—once a shepherd of ours, but now deceased,—in his time a master of the craft; and, being no way selfish, I promised the two porters a lesson, pointing out to them that there was some little difference between a windmill and the proper play. They seemed not very anxious to learn, but, no time being like the present, I insisted, and slowly and methodically broke both of their heads, with a good stroke to the bargain, for the edification of their minds, and the better to impress the lesson. It must have done some good, as it at least brought to them modesty, for I never heard mention of cudgels to me again. Nor of much else, to tell the truth; for I got the name of being a lad who was keen to have his own way, and had plenty of strength

to help in the getting thereof. In this I had great luck; for it is rarely that Report, with her many tongues, speaks so near the truth.

“Now,” I thought to myself, “now that that collieshangie is over, I’ll be able to mak’ things a wee pleasanter.”

But who ever thought on pleasure and got it for the first time of asking? Not David Duras, at any rate, for Pleasure is a goddess very much like Baal—uncertain and long at meal-times, and fond of sleep. One may cry and cry, but it’s a different matter her listening, and latterly you give it up as a bad job, when all at once she will waken up and think :

“Dear, dear, I must have nodded. Folk will maybe think I have been sleeping. I wonder if anybody’s been crying to me? I’ll just take a handful of my gifts and give them a scatter. They who catch will say ‘Thank ye, mem’; while they who have cried and got nothing will see that they don’t deserve anything.”

But, try how I liked in the house, I could never settle down on a secure basis of contentment. Simon himself was easy enough to get

on with outside business hours, for he looked at me little and said less. Indeed, I might have thought myself and my hopes of advancement forgotten in his mind did he not occasionally slide a book bearing on the trade into my hands, or ask a crafty question of me regarding any he had given to me before.

With Rose, however, it was a different matter. Had she treated me as a servant of the house I would have been to her as such, making no attempt at familiarity, but keeping to my place. Had she treated me as such, I would have been content for the time. Had she treated me as lower than a servant, I would have bowed my head and done her bidding; for what was I but a porter ?

But Mistress Rose had no such thought. When the labours of the day were over and we were settled down in the house she would lull her father to sleep on the harp, which she played with an adorable grace; while I, over my book, would watch, dreaming such sweet dreams. In those hours I learnt well every look of her face, every grace of her movements, every charm of her being.

I loved that hour with a great love, for in it I could dream I was with her—with her, not merely in the same room, companions in body, but with her in soul. I grudged every minute that was wasted by an interruption, for in my dream I made out that she was playing to me alone. Sometimes I would talk to her softly, but only in fancy, and she would answer me in low tones, striking soft chords on the harp as she spoke. Sometimes I would dream that she left her harp, and together we went to the window and threw the casement open. Hand in hand we looked over the moonlit world in the sweet silence of lovers' talk.

Little wonder it was I loved the hour that brought me such sweet dreams. With the harp tenderly nestling into her bosom, her fingers wandered over the strings, straying in idle, tuneful measure with the heart of many songs in it. In her face I could read every feeling that stirred the wayward song. A touch of pathos in the eyes, and stealing over the room would come from the harp a sweet melody, with a recurring wail in it like the cry of a lass at a broken tryst. Or a lilt would

come into her playing, and I fancied I could hear the wind stirring the ripe corn, with the "sparkle" of water in a burn near at hand, and her eyes would light up with seeming recollection.

Though I loved that hour, I fought sometimes against the fascination of it as dear-bought enjoyment, for the pain of awakening was the greater the more I yielded myself to it.

Sometimes, indeed, she was gracious to me when the music had come to a stop, but generally with the end there would come a contemptuous look, accompanied with a gibe.

"Sleeping yet, Cousin Davie?" she would ask.

"Dreaming would be nearer the truth, Rose."

"Of what, you great booby? Meat? Are ye not satisfied yet?"

"Nay, Rose," I would answer, "not of that kind of meat, but of meat for the soul."

"Whose soul?" she would demand.

"Mine, Rose."

"Yours!" she would cry. "Well, we're aye learning."

"Learning what, Rose?"

“More of your anatomy, Davie.”

“Have not I a right to a soul, Rose?” I would remonstrate.

“A bonnie right!” she would cry. “Get to your book, man, and find out if ye have a brain before ye begin a search for your soul.”

And so the wrangle would continue. Once or twice in a month, truly when I was but in poor heart from much of this treatment, she would relax, and with heads close together we would pore over the same book for an hour or so, during which time she proved herself a charming companion, interrupting our reading with many quaint remarks and opinions that showed her learning and good feeling.

But after the hour was ended I would call myself a fool; for what were they but the means of removing the armour that her continued quips might have raised, and making me but a softer target for the keen shafts of her ridicule? Fool though I was and knew of it, it was ever the same. Sulky and hurt as I might be, she had but to smile on me for a moment and the pain and ill-humour disappeared. Angered though I might be and

stiff with resentment, I was as clay in her hands when it pleased her to mould me.

I wondered at this for long enough, for I am by no means pliable by nature, and gradually it dawned upon me that I was in love with the maid. Thereat I went up to my chamber and fairly gave way to my grief, for it only needed a hopeless love to complete the misery that my affairs seemed to have fallen into.

But when my grief had spent itself, as I could not rid myself of the passion, I took it closer into my heart and loved it for the very pain it gave me.

CHAPTER XI.

THE PEST !

It happened about this time that, Simon Carter being in Flanders on his business, Rose and I were alone in the house. We were engaged in our usual occupation—wrangling—when one of the maids broke suddenly into the room, crying out that the Pest was in the town. Rose's face turned white, and, I dare say, could I have seen mine own, there would not have been much difference, for the Pest was a terrible visitor to entertain. It had been in Perth for fully two months, and at the last news was still raging there. At Edinburgh and St. Andrews also it had broken out, though not to such a great degree. At the first news of the outbreak in the North the people in Anstruther had been sorely afraid, but gradually as day after day passed and we were untouched by

its dread hand, the excitement had calmed down. Folk followed the King's example generally with regard to this trouble, declaring, when it was afar off, that "the Pest always smites the sickarest such as flies it furthest and apprehends deepliest the peril thereof," but, when it became clearly manifest that the Pest was at their own doors, they lost all their good theories and fled with the "flightest."

The maid who brought the news brought also tidings of the outrush that had already commenced from the town, and she herself demanded her fee that she might be off and away from the terror-stricken town.

"Ye ungrateful hizzie !" I cried, in great wrath, "is this your return for the trouble that Mistress Rose took with ye in nursing you through your illness ? It's like the lave of ye—fine grateful words from your mouth ; but at the first occasion to put them in practice—where are ye ?"

"Oh, but, Duras, it's sic a terrible thing !" cried the lass. "I love my mistress dearly, but——"

“Ye dinna care what becomes of her as long as ye’re safe. Is that it?”

“I’m feart to dee!” she cried.

“And well ye might,” quoth I.

“Dinna be so hard on the lassie, Davie,” said Rose, softly, putting her hand on the maid’s shoulder and soothing her; “she’s only a woman, taking her example, I have no doubt, off them that should have set her a better. Wheesht now, Jean, ye’ll win away the morn’s morning. Just go quietly up to your bed and lie down, say a bit prayer, and, toots, the Pest will no come near ye.”

“Oh, mistress, mistress!” sobbed the maid, clinging to Rose, “I’m feart to dee, but now I think—I think I would rather dee than rin awa’ from ye.”

“There’s a brave lass,” said Rose, when the maid had retired.

“Ye can tak’ her with ye the morn, Rose,” I said.

“Tak’ her where?” asked Rose.

“Why, to your aunt’s house in Coupar,” I replied.

“And who said I was going there?” she asked.

“ But ye must. I insist on it ! ” I cried.

“ And who are ye to insist on anything that’s to do with me, David Duras ? ” she said, with a return to her old manner. I as usual was daunted for a bit by her tone—it had always that effect,—but recovering heart, I determined to play the man.

“ Ane who’s the head of this house,” I said, firmly.

“ My glory, Davie,” she cried, with affected astonishment, “ ye’re getting on ! ”

“ It does not matter for that,” I said, warmly. “ The question is, will ye go ? ”

“ And the answer is, ‘ No,’ ” she said, equally warmly.

“ But why ? ” I cried.

“ Because it suits me,” she said, calmly.

“ That’s no answer,” I said, “ and I tell ye plainly, Rose, that if ye will not go by yourself, by the Lord, I’ll carry ye.”

“ High words, Davie,” she whispered. “ But ye ken well that ye durst not lay a finger on me without my consent.”

She was right—I durst not in ordinary times; but the dread for her staying in a Pest-haunted

town had changed the circumstances, and now I felt I could dare anything.

But first, I thought, I'll try if I can't get her to go by using her father's name.

Truly he had given me no right to do so—but, then, he did not know what was going to happen. So I lied freely, and wondered at the readiness with which the falsehoods came, for to lie is no habit of mine.

“But, Rose, ye would not disobey your father's orders?”

“He has given me none!” she cried.

“Ay, but he left me some,” I said.

“And what were they, Maister Order?” she asked.

“‘Duras,’ he said to me, before he left, ‘Duras, I’m leaving ye a grave charge, and that’s my daughter, Duras. *If the Pest comes to Anstruther shift her from it at once.* I ken fine she’ll not be wanting to leave the house till I come home, but heedna ye her, Duras. Shift her, though ye had to do it with your own hands, Duras. I leave ye with this caution, Duras: if I find when I come back that ye have not obeyed me, even although the disobedience

arose from her determination to stay, by the Lord, it'll be the worse for ye !' "

" He said that, did he ? " asked Rose.

" He did," I said.

" When ? " she demanded.

" The day before he sailed," I said, firmly, and craftily too; for if I had said the day he sailed, as I was at first tempted to do, I would have been discovered, for, tearful at his going, she had bided by his side the whole of that day.

" Aweel, I'll go, then," she said, slowly, and sore disappointed.

I sat down at the table, and with elbows thereon and head in my hands, began to think and plan out the procedure for next day. It was dreich work; for besides her going, there was a crear lying waiting discharge at the harbour.

Thinks I, " If the porters tak' fright like the rest of the folks, my faith, but we're in a bonny fix. Nobody to tak' the cargo out of the *Marie*, and her waiting to sail back to Antwerp for another cargo. And Simon waiting at Antwerp for her to tak' him back here. There he'll stand waiting and wondering, maybe for

days, maybe for weeks, guid kens. My soul, but he'll be in torment;" and I laughed bitterly aloud at the prospect.

I felt Rose's hand lie on my shoulder, and fearing that it was but another of my dreams, I did not stir lest it might take flight.

"What are ye thinking of so deeply, Davie?" she asked.

"Of the work of the morn, Rose," I said.

"Ay," she said, with bitterness, "that's the best of being a man, ye can aye be doing something, while woman can only greet. Davie," she went on, her voice changing into wonder, "what mak's ye so changed the day?"

"In what way, Rose?" I said, cautiously, lest this might be only another of her traps to waylay me.

"I dinna ken," she said, hesitatingly, "but ye've changed till a man. I never thought ye had it in ye. What brought it, Davie?"

God, He knows, with my heart beating fast at the thought, I longed to tell her that it was love; but instead I answered, lightly:

"What but a sense of duty, Rose?"

"It was wonderful," she went on in the same

tone that sent the blood to my head to hear, “wonderful ! Will I confess it, Davie ?—ye nearly made me go against my will, without even speaking my father’s name. Wisna that a sair fa’ for me, Commander Davie ? Do all men change from quiet lads into tyrants as ye have done, Davie, at the sense of duty ? Oh, Davie, I fair blush to think of how you must have said often to yourself when I was teasing ye, ‘Tits, let the lassie have her humour, I’m man enough not to mind.’ ”

“I never did, Rose,” I said, forgivingly. “I even liked it,” I added, when I saw how far cast down the maid was at the thought.

“Oh, that was good of ye, Davie; but I’m afeared ye have had many a good laugh on the quiet at me.”

“Never a ane,” I said firmly.

She put her arm round my shoulder a little further, and said longingly :

“Oh, Davie, I wish I had gone of my own free will, and no just from my father’s orders.”

“But what difference does it mak’, Rose, so long as ye go ? ”

“Davie, do you not see ? ” she asked.

“ I’m bound to say I don’t,” I replied.

“ Well,” she said, “ when he comes home the first question he’ll ask me will be (for ye ken how he loves me), ‘ Well, Rose, did ye tak’ good care of yourself for the auld man’s sake ? ’ And what’ll I have to answer, Davie ? Just that I did not do it for his sake, but only on account of his orders. Do ye not see why I’m sorry, Davie ? ”

“ Ay,” I said, “ I see now; but he need never know.”

“ That does not mak’ any difference, Davie,” she said, as she withdrew her arm, and went to the window-seat sorrowfully. “ It’s my own thoughts that give me the pain.”

She was quiet for a little, and I returned to my plans.

Presently I heard from the window-seat a sound of weeping and quiet sobbing, and, turning hastily round, saw Rose leaning her head away from me on her arm, and crying bitterly.

“ What is it, Rose ? ” I said, in alarm.

“ Oh, I wish I had gone from my own desire ! I wish I had never heard his orders.”

I could not understand the humour she was in regarding this, to me, trivial hair-splitting ; but knowing how they loved each other, I did not feel myself fit to judge. I tried to comfort her, but she would not be comforted. I tried to reason it with her, but my reasons did not prevail. The sobbing went on, and ever the same plaint :

“ Oh ! I would have gone of myself in a little, if ye had not been so hasty. But now I’ve got his orders, and it’s no virtue in me to go.”

My heart was sore at her distress, and none the less so because her father’s orders were only mine.

“ Oh, why did ye not give me time to think about it, Davie ? Of course I would have gone,” she went on.

Hearing this, I determined to relieve her sorrow by telling her the truth.

“ Nay, nay, Rose, dinna greet sae sair. I’m no altogether sure your father did give me the orders.”

“ Oh, if that was only true ! ” she said, imploringly.

“To tell ye the truth, Rose, I dinna think he did.”

“But you’re not sure, Davie?” she said with a sob.

“Ay, I’m sure, Rose,” I answered.

“On your honour, Davie?” she asked, tearfully.

“On my honour, Rose,” I said.

“I was sure of it all the time!” she cried, joyfully, jumping up from the seat, and showing me her face with never a tear in it. “Oh, but I’ll pay ye out for this, David Duras! Ye dinna lie naturally at all, Davie, and ye’re but a daft gowk that ony bairn could mak’ a fool of, and tak’ a secret from.”

“That may be so,” I said, wearily, for my heart was very sad. “But God forgive ye for the pain ye have caused me this night.”

CHAPTER XII.

I HAVE IT OUT WITH ROSE.

I HAD intended to say more, and with greater emphasis. I had intended to lift the dam of restraint from the current of my anger, but the vanity of mere words came to me and my soul-sickness, so I held my peace and sat down at the table again in sore fellness of heart. I tried hard to think of my plans for the next day—of how *she* was to be got out of town, but never for more than a moment could I get my mind away from the memory of a picture I had once seen of a galley and a merchantman.

The galley was a war galley, and the merchantman a huge clumsy ship compared to it, of thrice the size, and tattered sorely by the shot of its unwelcome neighbour. One could imagine the whole scene. The light boat and the merchantman vainly trying to wear round

so that the stern-piece might cover the galley. Willing arms, and the light boat skimming here, there, and everywhere, and pouring in her deadly shot at her fancy.

I could not get my mind away from it, for it was just the picture of Rose and me, and it did not sweeten my heart in the least; for it is an ill thing to think whiles that you have appeared big and clumsy, but it is a worse thing to be sure of it. It is no consolation to think that ye're just as God made ye; for while a man can accept martyrdom with calmness, a grain of oats catching in his throat craftily will cause him much repining and complaining of his lot.

I tried to comfort myself also with the knowledge that it was not essential to a man's glory to be quick in quippery; but did that lend me any comfort?—not a grain. I knew it was only vanity that kept me from being consoled by it, but what good did that do me? The currents of vanity and knowledge run so criss-cross, that there is no keeping a straight course.

So my thoughts always left my heart the more cheerless. Another man in my place

would have turned reckless and gone the gait his quick thoughts bent him; but always behind my first thoughts there comes a second that acts as a drag on my inclination and stops the action set up by the first. I have called this fear, and at other times prudence ; which it is, God wot me, I cannot tell.

When holding the shafts of a plough, and looking behind me at the new-made furrow, I have seen a worm turned up, and the following flock of crows dart at it, fighting and squabbling each for its share, all save two or three grave and portly members of the school. These heeded not the disputed morsel, but held on their way gravely, and while the fighters were gulping each morsel of the original worm, their wiser brethren had each by that time a whole one to his own maw. Thus it is with me, save when "bluid rins warm" in bodily action. I stand free from the burly and await the surer gain. When Fortune has been none so kind to a man, it is unwise to be careless of the joints of his harness ; which is the same thing as the saying that "it's ill to shoot in front of a bad archer." So, being ignorant of my own skill,

I wished to place nothing of mine in front of my shooting.

It is easy looking back on a time when you suffered sorely, and seeing all the ins and outs of the business, saying, "What a fool ye were to let it disturb ye;" but it is none so easy to endure the same when you see no way out of the business, nor anything but disaster in front. So I sat me at the table in fell low spirits.

After a while Rose came near me, and said, coaxingly :

"I'm going to mak' ye something good for supper. What would ye like ?"

Now at this the pain at my heart gave another stoun. Was that her thought ? Was I nothing but a dour horse that she could call to her with the rattle of grain in a sieve ?

"I'm no heeding for anything, Rose," I said, trying to put the pain within me out of my voice.

She came closer to me and put her arm through mine, laying her head near me in a pretty way.

"Are ye so angry with me, Davie ?" she asked.

I answered not, my heart was too full. Already I felt as if it would break with a torrent of tears from my eyes.

“Dinna be dour, Davie,” she said, bringing her head lower and trying to look me in the eyes; but I turned away my head from her.

“Davie, will I say I’m sorry?” she said, coaxingly, peeping further round. Then something dropped on to the table, and for a moment there was silence.

Then she asked in a broken whisper :

“Was it a tear, Davie?”

“Oh, woman,” I cried, jumping up, “have you no pity? Is it not enough to have brought this pain upon me, without needing to see how ill I bear it? Was it not enough to have brought a man out of his own thoughts, which were dreich enough, into yours, and made him feel the pain which you were only simulating? Ay, a tear it was, and a tear I’m ashamed of, since it was called forth by no worthy object, but just by the wantonness of a woman.”

I turned away from her.

“Oh, Davie!” she said, coming after me, and catching one of my hands in hers and pressing

it between her own in nervous jerks. "Oh, Davie, but I didna ken ye took it so much to heart."

"To heart!" I cried. "I'm not a stone, Rose, that I can see a woman greeting and not feel the grip of the same sobs at my throat."

"Oh, Davie, Davie!" she cried, and I could almost believe she was meaning it, "I'm fair wild with myself. Ye shouldna mind me."

"And that's what I ask myself often, Rose—why do I mind ye?" I cried.

"Yes?" she said, softly.

"And I can find no answer," I said, stoutly.

"None?" she asked.

"None," I said, as firmly, "save this—that I am ill-inclined to give up my faith in ye; that I am ill-inclined to give up my faith in woman, and think that a sweet hour from them is only the fause front to a month of mockery."

"But I mind ye said ye even liked it, Davie," she said, beginning to brisken up as I got a little cooled.

"Ye have ower guid a memory to be compassionate, Rose."

"Ney, Davie," she said, protestingly. "I

didna mean it that way. I was only wondering if men, as well as women, said more than they meant at times. Will ye no believe that I'm sorry, Davie ? ”

“ I'm loth to lay myself open to another disappointment,” I said. “ Oh, Rose, I ken there's no way of forcing a liking——”

“ But I like ye well enough, Davie,” she cried.

“ Ye conceal it wonderfully, then, Rose,” I said. “ I ken no other way out of it; for do you not see, Rose, that this cannot go on ? I must be either one thing or another : your friend or your servant. I'm keen enough to be the first, and willing enough to be the second.”

“ Would I say I was sorry to my servant, Davie ? ” she said, quietly ; so quietly and free from mockery, that it came to me to believe her.

The belief that she had accepted me as her friend was so sweet, that I had not the heart to force her to say it in stronger words, and so I rested content with the grain of inference she had thrown me.

CHAPTER XIII.

IN SPITE OF THE PEST ROSE STAYS IN ANSTRUTHER.

“WHAT do ye think of doing then, Rose?” I asked, trying by taking her into counsel to make her side against herself.

“What’ll ye be thinking of doing yourself, Davie?” she said, giving me but one question for another.

“I’m clean out of the matter, Rose,” I said, “for I’ll have to stay here and get the *Marie* cleared.”

“Ye’ll no can do that,” she cried, “for there will be never a porter to tak’ work in Anstruther the morn.”

“Well,” I said, “I’ll have to make shift myself.”

“What?” she cried. “It’ll tak’ ye a week.”

“Will it?” I said, quietly.

“Will it no?” she answered, emphatically.

“We’ll see,” I said, “and I’ve little doubt

I'll prove ye very far wrong, Rose ; for ye mustna forget I'll be working to pay back some of the debt of kindness I owe to your father."

"But what's the hurry about the *Marie* ?" she asked.

"Well," I said, "your father's waiting at Antwerp till her return. He's coming back in her, and if she's delayed here a day or a week he'll need to kick his heels in idleness on the quay."

"Let her go as she is," said Rose, getting excited when she saw how the sailing of the *Marie* would affect her father's homecoming.

"I've no kent your father long, Rose," I said; "but I think I can safely say he'd rather wait till doomsday than see a boat of his come back as it went, with never a bale of stuff shifted or sold. Nay, Rose, it must be cleared by the morn's night, that's the long and the short of it. And, since that's settled, let's consider on what you'll do."

"Still harping on that auld string, Davie ?" she said, with a smile. "Is there no learning ye a lesson ? Here I am, and here I'll bide."

"That's just nonsense, Rose !" I cried.

“If it’s nonsense, Davie,” she answered, “then I’m a fool, for it’s the only sense I mean to understand.”

“But what good will it do, Rose?” I urged. “Ye ken——”

“Ye’re no very complimentary, Davie,” she interrupted. “It’s no every one that would be so ill in their taste as to refuse the company of a lassie—like me,” she added.

“It’s a terrible tricky tongue that of yours, Rose, for putting the wrong side in a guid light, for ye ken fine there’s nothing I would enjoy more; but I’m modest, Rose. I’m no asking for the sun always—just for a wee bit whiles. Now, I’m kind of wearying for the dark. Everything is the better of a contrast, Rose, and oh! but the country is bonnie the noo. Your aunt in Coupar, too, is aye wearying to see ye. Will ye let her weary, Rose?”

“Ye talk about a tongue, Davie,” Rose said. “My glory! but ye have one yourself that would fetch a tod from its hole.”

“Then ye’ll go, Rose?” I cried, joyfully.

“Ay, Davie,” she said, “to bed, for I’m fell weary.”

“Oh, but, Rose!” I began again, “what good will it do ye staying here, when ye might be out of harm’s way? Ye serve no purpose by staying here.”

“Ay, but I will, Davie,” she cried, “for I’ll serve ye your meals.”

“But anybody will be guid enough for that,” I said.

“Anybody is generally nobody,” she answered.

“Betsy will do it,” I cried, referring to the woman who attended to the kitchen.

“Betsy is away ere now,” said she, “if she behaves like what she did last time.”

“I’ll cook for myself, Rose,” I said.

“My glory, no!” she cried. “Men talk on how women neglect solid food and eat nothing but confections when the men folk are away; and it’s bad enough, I’ll admit. But the Lord preserve a man who’s called on sudden to eat his ain cooking.”

“But, Rose,” I protested, “I’m not such a bad——”

“Oh, Davie,” she interrupted, “canna ye see that it’s of no use—that I’ll not go? If ye’re thinking that ye’ll mak’ me change my

mind, ye might as well save your breath to cool the broth I'll cook for ye the morn."

"But why, Rose?"

"Have not I given you reasons, Davie?"

"They're but wide of the mark, Rose," I said. "Woman's reasons folk call them."

"And am I not a woman?"

"Then I never saw such an obstinate ane!" I cried.

"That does not make me less a woman, does it, Davie?"

"No," I said, "but I would rather it made me a womanless man. But let us stick to the point, Rose. Ye say ye'll not go away from Anstruther, and I'm asking ye fair and snod—Why?"

"Will ye have my real reason, then, Davie?"

"I would be obliged to ye, Rose, for I'm turning fair dizzy with all these whirls."

"Then the real truth is, Davie," she said, "I'm not going to be outdone by ye."

"But, Rose," I cried, "there's no question of doing or outdoing. I'm only staying because it's my work—the only work I'm guid for, and the work I was set to; but for ye——"

“ Ay, for me, Davie,” she said, “ how does it apply to me ? Here’s a man—a man who’s not bound to the house—who’s got nothing to be thankful to us for (for ye ken well, Davie, ye’ve more than earned whatever ye’ve got)—staying and working alone so that my father will not be inconvenienced, and will be home the sooner. While there am I (by your way o’t, Davie) gallivanting and enjoying myself—away at the first sign of trouble—seemingly without ae thought or wish whether my father should return in ae week or ae month. Tak’ it hoo ye like, it’s a picture I wouldna care to be drawn in. Besides, Davie, ye must not forget I’m more than a daughter of the house, for in a sense I’m a partner—an ornamental ane, as ye were pleased to say once—and it would ill become such to flee with the lave of the servants, leaving money and gear to come by as best they might. Are these no sufficient reasons for me staying, Davie ? ”

“ They might be, Rose,” I said, “ if ye were a man. But ye ken well that yer father—or put it as ye had it—your partner values ye and yer well-being far above the whole of his goods.

Can ye no see, Rose, that it's more than yer own life ye're risking? The happiness of your father, ay, his life, is bound up with you, Rose; and yet ye would risk all these rather than allow yourself to be beat by a man that's got no hindrances like them to hold him out of the battle. Does that not look a wee thing selfish to ye, Rose?"

"Oh, Davie, Davie! Ye're a terrible lad for getting to the bottom of things," she said, with a half-comical, half-earnest expression. "Since I must confess all, I'll tell ye now, though I'm sweert, for it will likely appear bold for a maid to say; but, Davie, I'm tired of this running away from the Pest. I would fain set an example to the other women of courage. God's mercy is surely great enough to save us from trusting to our speed. Whatna good does all this scurry and hurry into the country do? None, Davie—ay, and less than none, for it but increases the disease. They take the infection with them, and does lying wet and hungry in the lee of a hedge help a man or woman to resist it the better? They flee to the country for clean air and lodging. In God's name tell

me, why should they not have it in their homes, if they would but bestir themselves and mak' the swine the sole livers in middens. To start this, Davie, some one has to mak' a stand. A poor stand it'll be I will mak', Davie, but yet a stand, and would my father, or even ye, gainsay me ? ”

She waited awhile for my answer, and though loth to say it, say it I had to.

“ God help me, no ! ” I cried. “ But, Rose, mind that ye tak' more than yer father's happiness or life with ye, for I——”

“ I will that, Davie,” she interrupted, abruptly, “ for I'll tak' plenty of clean water with me.”

CHAPTER XIV.

A PEST-STRUCK TOWN.

WHEN I got outside the house next morning as the sun rose, I thought all the fools in the country had made a raid on the town and were pillaging it. Such a hurry and scurry I never saw in my born days. Every one for himself, as much as his wits would let him. It would have been laughable had it not been so pitiable. Here one man had carefully locked up the door and barred the windows, and found he had left all his money inside. Of course in his hurry he could not find the key again. Ranting and raving, he was now running through the town looking for the smith to come and open his house to him. Another man, whose door-lock either did not exist or was out of order, had put his wife and children outside, and had barred the door, piling all the heavy furniture against it from

the inside. Then he had started to make his way out by the window, but was now held fast by the middle, so that he could neither withdraw nor come out. His bairns and wife were calling on him to make haste ere the Pest took hold of them.

“Oh ! hurry, Jock ! hurry !” cried the wife, “or we’re din for ! Oh, lend him a hand, neighbour !” she entreated the passers-by.

But they were too busy to heed.

“Oh, Jock, pull yourself through ! Put your strength into it !” she continued to cry.

“God help me, Jean, I can move neither here nor there ! I misdoubt ye’ll have to leave me and fend for yourself.”

The woman took a long look of love at the children, then turned to him resolutely.

“Na, na, Jock, I canna do that. I took ye for better or worse, but I never thought it would come to this. Oh, ye might give my man a hand to get through the window, maister !” she cried to me, entreatingly.

“I’m feared he’s rather a tight fix,” I said, as I got a good grip of the man’s oxters, and gave a good fair pull without freeing him in the least.

“ Oh, maister, put your full strength into it ! ” cried the woman. “ Never mind the window.”

“ Or me,” cried the man.

“ Here to it then ! ” I cried, and gripping the fellow in the same place, but getting a rare purchase against the wall with my feet, I put out, in one great pull, my whole strength.

He came, and the window frame with him, and both on the top of me.

As I scrambled out from the *débris*, the woman came to me and said :

“ Oh, I’ll mind ye for this, maister—when I come back ! ”

And was for running off, when I, thinking this would be a good opportunity to help Rose’s endeavours, detained her for a moment, saying :

“ Ye’re as safe here as anywhere, mistress.”

“ I ken that’s what’s said by them that should ken; but do they practise what they preach ? Na, that’s a different story; and I’m no going to be the first till try it.”

I would have argued it out with her, but had no chance, for ere I could think on my first

words she was away, and my words were heard only by myself and maybe the broken window-frame at my feet.

I thought to myself :

“Rose’s teaching may prevail over their fears, but she’ll have to catch her fish afore she salts it.”

During my walk down to the quay I had kept an open eye for any of the porters, but with little success. At last one comes running past me, and was ill-inclined to stop, but catching him by the shoulder, I asked him :

“And where will ye be bound for, Andrew Harvey ? ”

“Anywhere,” he cried, his eyes mad with fear. “Anywhere out of this Pest-struck town.”

“And what about the *Marie* ? ” I asked.

“To —— with the *Marie*, and ye too ! ” he yelled. “Let go my shoulder, or I’ll put a knife intil ye ! ” he added, plucking a dagger from his belt.

“Dinna tak’ knives to me, Andrew ! ” I said, catching his right wrist. “Are ye the man I could have sworn would be the last to show a

sign of cowardice ? Are ye going to flee with the others like a frightened sheep ? ”

He was but a poor shauchily bit of a wizened creature, but every man is a hero if ye can flatter him into the belief that it is his nature so to be.

He straightened up at my words, and his face looked nearly bold as he asked :

“ Did ye so, man ? ”

“ Ay, but I did, Andrew. Come on, man, and let’s set an example to the others. We’ll have a fine laugh at them when they creep back. Come on, Andrew, and we’ll clear the *Marie* atween us.”

But at the words the old horror came back into his eyes, and he asked almost in a whisper with awe :

“ Have ye no heard who’s come down with *it*, Duras ? ”

“ No,” I said, “ and I carena.”

“ But it’s Jamie Maitland,” he cried, “ ane of the men we were working alongside the day before yestreen.”

“ Jamie Maitland ? ” I cried.

“ Ay, and they say—and who dare doubt it—

that it was the *Marie* brought the Pest ! It was there he got it."

"It was nothing of the kind," I cried, "for ye ken as well as myself that he wasna there yestreen."

"That mak's nae differ, tho'," he cried, "for he was there the day afore. Na, na, it's in the *Marie*; where else could he have got it ?"

"Now ye're getting nearer the answer, Andrew," I said, "for ye ken well that Jamie was consorting and drinking all day yestreen with that stranger gipsy woman. That's where he got it."

"He might, but then he might no," said Andrew. "He's just as likely to have got it in the *Marie*."

"Nonsense, man ! Come on !" I cried.

"I'll no risk it !" he cried, and with a sudden wrench Andrew freed himself and fled like a hare.

"That crowns it all !" I said to myself ; but I was mistaken, for when I got to the boat I found a greater ploy there than all taking place. There was nothing uncommon-looking at first sight, for the boat was quiet enough,

with only the master, Seth Rilas, walking from side to side at the waist; but when I got closer I saw, to my surprise, that his sword was hanging naked by his side, and that he carried a musket, the match of which he kept carefully in trim. Besides his seaman's knife, he had a cutlass stuck in his belt, and every time he turned in his walk his hand wandered down to his sword and felt that it was quite free, then to his cutlass with similar precaution. He gave a threatening glance to the fore-castle, and then commenced his march again. There was a weary halt in his march that was foreign to his usual gait; for, though he was of short stature and burly, with shoulders like an ox, he was very lithe and quick in his movements generally. At other times what of his complexion could be seen from the luxuriant beard and bristling moustache was ruddy, but now it had turned to a yellow tint, and under his eyes deep black rings had formed. He was a man of few words, and even of these few indifferent to the use of them. The sailor-men called him a tyrant, but the boys of the ship loved him with a love that was strangely deep between

master and boy when brutality was ever the readiest mentor.

“Guid day till ye, Captain !” I cried, as I sprang on board.

He gave one short, sharp look at me, then his glance sprang back to the forecastle. Four or five heads had peeped out at my cry, but were hastily withdrawn as Seth cried :

“To yer kennels, dogs !”

I went up to him, and before I could speak he said in a low voice :

“Whisper.”

“What’s wrong, Captain ?” I said, obeying him.

“Mutiny,” he answered.

“Mutiny ?” I said. “But why ?”

“Fear,” he replied.

“But what of ? Is it the Pest ?”

He nodded.

“But they run no risk if they don’t go ashore.”

The Captain shrugged his shoulders.

“Don’t ye believe, Captain,” I said. “It’s nonsense to say it came with the *Marie* because a porter took it. He wasna here yestreen, but

with a gipsy woman, who was a thousand times more likely to have it than the *Marie*. There was no word of it when ye loaded the cargo, was there, Captain ? ”

“ None.”

“ Then what do they want ? ” I asked.

“ To go ashore,” he said.

“ But that’s running into the very heart of it. Can ye no mak’ them listen to reason ? ”

He turned on me with an angry annoyed look, and for once gave free vent to his words.

“ Can ye no exercise a little thought, Duras, and argue ? Do ye think I would have kept single watch here from six yestreen to this time if I could have got them to stay any other way ? They’re sailor-men, and frightened sailor-men to the bargain. It’s no what ye think or what I think, it’s what *they* think ye’ve to reckon with. Dinna lose time talking, but get yer porters down and clear the cargo out of the ship, and we’ll away.”

“ Porters ? ” I said. “ There’ll be never a ane here for guid kens the days.”

“ Then we’re done for,” he said, wearily, laying down his musket.

The heads once more appeared at the fore-castle, and the shoulders were rapidly following, when I said quickly :

“ But I’m going to clear her myself.”

“ Are ye ? ” he asked, giving me another look.

“ Can ye no keep them for another eight hours ? ” I asked, eagerly.

“ Do ye no see I’m near falling down with want of sleep ? ”

“ Ay, I see that,” I said. “ And sorry I am. But, oh, man, couldna ye last ? There will be no getting the boat out if ye let these sailors go, for we’ll no get others to come near the town for who kens the time. Could ye no last, Captain ? It’s for the credit of the house I’m asking ye, for if Simon Carter is detained long in Antwerp matters will be in a bonny pickle here, with clerks and all fled. Could ye no last out, Captain ? ”

He took up his musket, and cried to the men :

“ Back ! ” Then to me he said, “ Work, then; oh, work, for this is like hell for me ! ”

CHAPTER XV.

THE MUTINY OF THE "MARIE."

THE *Marie* was of a build mainly intended for the carriage of such light goods as Simon Carter principally dealt in, as for example her present cargo, which consisted of bales of cloth, velvets, and plain silk. As suited this trade, she was permanently ballasted, and this brought the floor of her hold higher than ordinarily would have been the case. During the two previous days we had removed nearly three parts of her cargo, and it was now to the clearance of the last quarter that I bent my thoughts. The plan that I had formed in my mind over night was feasible enough, but it required the assistance of one other man. I had reckoned on securing at least that service; but now, when it seemed impossible, the whole foundation of my plannings crumbled beneath me. To ascend the slight perpendicular ladder

that led from the hold to the deck with each bale would take days before all was removed, and hours, not days, were in question now. If only the Captain could have lent a hand I was certain I could accomplish the task, but he had even more on his hands than me.

I took a look round the harbour to see if I could not get help, but never a soul was in sight. The three or four crears that lay by the quay were as deserted as the quayside. A lad, however slight, would have served my purpose, but not even such a one could I see. What had appeared easy at night, in the morning, like many another matter, took on a different complexion.

"You're no gleg in commencing," said the Captain.

"No, man," I said, "I'm not."

"Young promises," said the Captain, with a sneer and a light wave of his hand, which meant that the promises of a young man are equal to air.

"No, man," I said, angered a little, "it's no altogether that. When I said I would clear the boat myself, I meant with a trifling assistance !"

“Trifling,” said the Captain, sneeringly.

“Ay, trifling,” I said, “for it was no more and no less than just to unhook the bale when I landed it on deck. That was all.”

“More than enough, like this,” grunted the Captain with a comprehensive look from the men he held in check to the musket in his arm.

“Ay,” I said, sadly, “it looks so.”

There was a silence between us for a little while, an embarrassed silence, for I had a question to put to the Captain, the putting of which I little liked, and he already read the question in my eyes and liked it as little. At last I plucked up courage and said :

“You couldna manage to do it yourself, Captain ?”

He looked me straight in the eyes with an affected expression of so much admiration at my hardihood in proposing such a thing to a man whose hands were already so well filled, that I had to let mine fall to the deck.

“I’m no monkey,” he said, shortly.

“No,” I said, stoutly, “ye’re a man !”

His face softened the least wee bit at the words, for they rang with truth. He *was* a

man, and I knew it, and my lips spoke of my belief.

"Still with two hands only," he replied.

"Ay," I said, "but with a head worth many hands."

He gave a low shake of his head and said :

"It's the last straw."

"Man," I said, "I'll heave them up beside ye. Ye'll not need to move an inch. D'ye not think ye could manage it?"

His face was white with want of sleep and fatigue, but at my persistence, a rush of blood flushed it, and he turned on me angrily :

"See here, Duras, there's a limit to everything. I've held the ship ready to sail for twelve hours for ye, and I've said I'll hold it in the same state for six more. I've done that, and I've done enough, and I'm condemned if I know why I've done as much."

"It was sheer loyalty," I said, quickly.

"Sheer obstinacy would be more like," he replied.

"It was grand anyway," I said.

"Foolish would be a better word," he grumbled, quieting down, "for it's more like

to mean a knife in my back or a block falling on my head from these dogs than thanks from my betters."

"I can guarantee ye plenty of the last," I said, "for it's a great service ye're rendering to Simon Carter."

"It would need to be," he said, shortly.

After a while I said :

"What's it to be, then ? Is yer loyalty or obstinacy, as ye called it, to be of no avail ? Or will ye play the game out for what it's worth, and, in attending to the hook, risk the escape of two or three sailors ?"

"Oh, let's play it out," he said wearily.

"I'll never forget this, Seth Rilas," I said.

"Ye're no likely to," he said, "for there's trouble brewing for'ard."

"Well, we'll mak' hay while the sun shines," I said, as I sprang down the ladder into the hold.

The bales were, fortunately, of a handy size, and for two hours I laboured lustily, hooking them on one end of a rope reeved through a block, and handing them up with the other till they were as high as the deck. I had loosened the stays of the spar supporting the block, so

that with a hearty swing round the bale was suspended well over the deck for a moment, during which I quickly released the rope and managed to land its burden on the deck. The Captain then pulled the hook free, and, after lowering it, I was ready for the next bale. It was good, hearty work that a man could put his strength into, and I was just getting into the swing of it, though feeling an emptiness of my stomach that brought back to mind longingly the savoury breakfast table at the house, when a voice, like the call of a dove to his mate at the gloaming, cried :

"Davie !"

I looked up, and never a man saw a prettier picture. It was Rose. She was bending slightly over the edge of the hold. Her face was in the full radiance of the sun, catching much of the brilliance of the light, and losing none of its softness. Looking up through the darkness of the hold, which helped to intensify the effect, for a moment I thought it was the face of an angel.

"Davie !" she cried again.

"Rose," I asked, "what brings you here ?"

“I’ve brought yer breakfast, Davie !”

“Where are the maids ?” I cried.

“Where do the swallows go in winter, Davie ?” she replied, smilingly. “Come up and get yer breakfast.”

When I came upon deck I found her chattering away blithesomely to the Captain, and all the time daintily going here and there, till it seemed to us in a moment a little table appeared, and on it all the materials for a good meal. The Captain’s face had lost much of the strained look during her chatter, as whose would not ?—for even to watch her when silent was a pleasure, while to listen and watch was a delight.

The three of us sat down to breakfast. Seth Rilas in the centre, and facing the forecastle, and but for the musket across his knees and his constant watchfulness forward, one could hardly have guessed that anything beyond breakfast and pleasure was in our minds. Only at the end of our meal would Rose allow us to talk of the matter in hand.

“Is there any use talking to the sailors, Captain ?” she asked Seth.

"None," he said. "Ye'll only mak' their grievance worse by allowing them to argue about it."

"Then I'll set them an example," she said.

"Ye'll go home now, Rose, I hope," I said.

"Ye're doomed to disappointment, Davie," she said, smilingly, "for I'm going to help the Captain. I'm not much use, I know, but I can unloose the hook, and that will leave him free to attend to these poor cowards of sailors."

No talk on my part could stay her; and as for the Captain, he helped me not a whit, for everything she did seemed, beyond all question, good and wise to him, so I was forced to be content, and went down into the hold again.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE BIT FIGHT ON THE DECK.

FOR three hours I worked undisturbed, and made great inroads into the remainder of the cargo. I was in hopes that nothing would prevent the entire clearance of the *Marie*, and, refreshed by the idea, threw off also my shirt to give me the greater ease.

It was no light task I had set myself, and what with that and the heat of the hold, the sweat broke out on me in great drops. A great weariness and weakness came into my arms that was strange to me.

The continued use of the limbs in the same position seemed to knit the muscles into knots so that it was painful, and required exertion to move them even without their burden. Two more hours would clear her; but sometimes as the rope slipped through my fingers too

cramped to prevent it, I despaired of ever having the bales removed in time. The weariness spread from my limbs to my head, and though I kept up my rate of working, my brain ceased to direct my motions, and they had become quite mechanical.

A cry from the captain aroused me.

“Duras !”

“Ay !”

“Come up !”

I straightened my back and felt about for my shirt.

“Never mind your clothes. Quick !” cried the Captain.

There was as much in his tone as in his words of warning, and throwing my languor aside, I sprang up the ladder and gained the deck.

“It seems they’re going to try a rush,” said the Captain.

I took a look round. The tide was out by this time, and the timbers of the quay-side rose high above our deck. The only way the sailors could get to the quay was by the ladder, and that was at the waist

where we stood. They might slip overboard certainly, but the thick mixture of mud and water was none so inviting, and, apart from that, more than dangerous; for even a strong swimmer could have made little headway among the silt.

"How many are there of them?" I asked, hurriedly, as I tied a rope round my waist and stuck a cutlass in it.

"Seven. Five Scotch and two foreigners."

"There should be eight," I said.

"Ay, but my mate is away. He should be back before three, though, if he does not catch the fear, which he's not the man to."

The heads in the fore-castle were peeping in and out of the doors, and every now and again a burst of talking and oaths would reach our ears, as the men grew excited over their coming sally.

I looked about me for a less murderous weapon than the cutlass, and saw a bit of a broken capstan pole of about three feet in length; a fair good weapon if my arms were not too tired to use it.

"There'll be no killing, Captain," I said.

“For our purpose a sailor dead or wounded is as little use as a sailor escaped.”

The Captain nodded his head in agreement with me. Rose, who had been listening attentively to our discourse, laid her hand on the musket the Captain held, and said, anxiously (for the maid had a tender heart, even to those cowards of sailors) :

“Then there will be no using of this ?”

The Captain gave a quiet smile, and replied :

“No, for it’s no loaded.”

Even in our trouble there was something so humorous in the idea of seven men being held prisoners from the fear of an empty gun, that we laughed heartily.

“I’ll go forward, Captain, when the rush begins and stop the full force of it, and ye can deal with them that pass me. Are they armed ?”

“Well, they have their knives, that’s all, but enough too, if one should happen to get a slash. I think, Duras, I’ll go forward. I’m a fair guid hand at the sword.”

“Ay,” I said, “I heard so, but it’s no sword play that’s needed. Where there’s a sword

there's generally bluid, but with a staff like this there's nothing worse than broken heads. It's a manned ship we want, no a floating hospital."

"Give me the bit timber, then," he said.

But at that moment the noise in the fore part of the ship rose to a roar, and the doors were opened to their widest.

"Ye're over late, Captain," I cried. "Stand by the ladder and deal with stragglers. Rose, away to the stern;" and grasping tight the staff, I rushed forward in time to meet the men as they came running out of the forecastle.

They little expected to meet an opponent so soon, and I have no doubt they were taken much aback, for the first swing of my staff met with no attempt at a guard, and two men fell stunned to the deck with broken heads. The third slashed at me with his knife, and though I managed to evade the full force of the blow, yet it cut a cruel gash in my forehead. I had no time to recover my cudgel, and so drove the end I had in my hand stoutly into his midriff, knocking

the wind so completely from him that he tottered gasping for a moment, and then lay down on the deck.

The two foreign knaves, at the first sign of hard blows, had crept back quickly from whence they had come, so that now none was opposed to me but the remaining two sailors. The whole affray had happened so quickly that it was little wonder they stood stock-still as they had stopped, evidently trying to realise the change of affairs.

Had they come on me then, I have no doubt I would have gone down, for the blood from the wound was in my eyes, and blinding me almost entirely. Too dour to retreat, and not willing to come on, they stood; and, being ever fondest of peace, I thought I could not do better than try and make their defeat as easy to them as possible.

“Come now,” I said to them, “what’s it to be? Peace or war? It’s no fault of yours that the rush didna succeed. Had ye been backed up with men like yourselves, it would have been better. But now that we are two to two, and being better armed than ye, it’s no

disgrace in ye to give up a bad job. Come now, is't to be peace ? ”

Of course there could be no question which of the two ways was the best for their skins, and it they soon chose, accompanying their surrender, however, with the condition that they should be furnished with the materials for a meal, the which were kept behind the mast in the galley.

“ Most certainly,” I cried, “ and to prevent any ill blood I’ll send up a keg of rum. It’ll help to beguile the time for ye.”

They seemed pleased at the prospect, and, as they turned away to help their comrades, who were now recovering their energies, into the shelter of the forecastle, I heard one of them say to the other :

“ Faith, Jack, it’ll no need a musket to keep ye in this boat if ye’re to get a keg of rum aside ye.”

The other retorted :

“ Ay, Sandie, and it would need a musket to get ye away from the same companion.”

I heard that distinctly, but it was the last thing I mind; for, what with weariness and the

loss of blood that kept pouring from my forehead, I have only a misty recollection of staggering towards the stern of the boat, and hearing Rose's cry of "Oh, Davie!" and her kindly hands about me leading the way to the cabin, ere a faintness and then black darkness fell upon me.

CHAPTER XVII.

A MIGHTY PLEASANT TIME—CONSIDERING.

“Is the *Marie* away?” was my oft-repeated cry in the time that followed, and sometimes Rose would come near me and begin to reply, but ere ever I could hear a word she had vanished and darkness was where she had been.

Sometimes it would be Simon Carter himself that would come at my cry; but then I knew I only dreamt, for he was in Flanders. The long fretting agony of doubt with regard to the boat's sailing filled and wearied my mind for ages. If I could but be satisfied, I would lay myself down and sleep in comfort. Why did they not answer? Was it but another of Rose's vagaries? Surely she might be kind and tell me. Sail! How could it sail when it was not cleared? I had still some work to do. I must get up.

My clothes, where are they? I must rise and

finish the *Marie*. Simon was waiting on the *Marie*. Never mind my clothes; I'll work without them, for it's warm work in the hold. Warm? It's as hot as *hades*! The bales were few, and I handled them with speed. There were but fifty more. I got up the fifty to the deck; but there were more than fifty. I must have counted wrong. Fifty? There was a hundred yet. The hundred I lifted up on deck; but there was more than a hundred. The hold was full of them still. Would it never be emptied? They kept rising and rising till I was caught between them and the deck, and a nail from the deck pressed into my forehead. It ate its way nearly into my brain like red-hot iron. I was dying, dying! Oh, Rose, Rose! I would have got your father home, but who could clear the *Marie* when the bales rose quicker than one could shift them? I would have done it, Rose, so don't laugh.

The nail was touching my brain, and I felt that my hour had come; but then Rose lifted the deck up and laid her cool hands on my head. The pain of the nail went away like

magic, and I looked up into her face. The tears were in her eyes, and the rosy lips of her little mouth quivered.

“Rose !” I cried. “Oh !”

“Oh, Davie, Davie !” she sobbed. And I was getting up to ask her the wherefore of her tears; but a great sweet slumber came to me, and before I could even whisper a word I fell back on my pillow and went to sleep like a tired child on a hot summer’s day.

When I woke the pain in my head was gone, and a pleasant listlessness was in my limbs. Surely this was no cabin I was in. I took a look round the room, but it was strange to me till I had mind of the stranger’s bedroom in Simon Carter’s house. What was I doing there ? I wondered, but only pleasantly. It did not seem a matter to put one’s self about for. Nothing did, in fact ; for it was so delightful to lie still and hear through the open window the crisp, clear sound of the waves sporting with the beach, and now and again the cry of the sailors’ song, and then the creak of the capstan as some ship was drawn out of her moorings.

To breathe the air itself was a new-found joy, as it stirred gently the hangings at the window. The rays of the sun, too, made a merry play to watch on the counterpane, as they danced here and there. For me, it was just like a return to boyhood, as I would have wakened with a great scheme for the day's enjoyment in my head, and felt the joy of living in my heart and body.

I heard steps coming up the stair, and when the door opened I saw Rose and her father. At the sight of him I was sorry, for I thought after all, this was truly another dream, and a prelude to the pain that had come with the others. I was weary of pain, and wanted only to be let lie in peace.

Rose's face was pale, and black lines were under her eyes; and even Simon himself looked more careworn than his usual, and I wondered feebly what had arisen to cause this.

When they saw I was awake their faces lightened; and Rose came running to me, and, kneeling at the bedside, put her arm across me, crying :

“ Oh, Davie ! then ye're better ? ”

“Hush, hush, Rose !” said Simon, “ye must keep him quiet.”

I began to speak, but found somehow that voice was away from me, and only a whisper in its place sounded, as I said, pointing to her father :

“What’s he doing here, Rose ? He should be in Flanders. There’s no sense in this. The *Marie*, if she’s been emptied, will only just have sailed; he’s no right to be here.”

Rose laughed merrily; but at the ending her laugh changed imperceptibly, till it grew more like a sob.

“Poor old Davie ! never bother yer head how he got back. Ye’ve been very ill, and now ye must keep quiet.”

“Ill ?” I said, “for how long ?”

“Over a fortnight.”

“Then he got another boat to bring him back, then ?”

“No, he came back in the *Marie*.”

“Thanks to ye, dear lad,” said Simon. “Now ye must not talk more, but go to sleep, after ye’ve got yer bowl of broth.”

The which I did without more ado, and for

many a day afterwards the same routine took place. Eating a little, then sleeping for long enough, and then awakening but to eat and sleep. Ever when I opened my eyes I found Rose by my bedside, or quick to appear at my call, patient and long-suffering to my weakly whims and murmurings as a mother to her child. And when eating and sleeping became less than the sole duty of living, and my strength began to come back to me, I often felt inclined to direct the prayers meant for God to Him through her, for her nature now seemed to have part and portion of the angel's life.

After a time the bandage was taken from my forehead, and one morning when I felt so strong that I thought I would try to rise, I called to Rose for a hand-glass that I might see what sort of mark the knife-wound had left.

I looked in the glass and then laid it down, turning my face to the wall, and had Rose not been by me, I think I would have given way to tears. The rest of the face was comely enough, especially now that my beard had grown, but a

great red weal ran down from the hair to the bridge of the nose, and though it was raw at that time, I saw plainly from its nature that it was permanent. Would Fate never have flung her last shaft at me? Whatna maid would look twice at a man disfigured thus, save in derision? Though I tried to stifle it, a moan escaped me, and Rose, turning from her embroidery-frame, came quickly to me.

“What is’t, Davie?” she asked.

I did not speak, neither did I turn to her.

She was silent for a moment, and then I felt her lift the glass from the bed-cover.

“Was it this that made ye cry out, Davie?” she asked, gently.

“No,” I said, for it was what I saw in it that caused my grief.

I thought I had put her off with my denial, but ever she seemed to have the faculty of reading me like an opened book, for after a little while she said, coaxingly:

“Was it in this ye saw cause for pain, Davie?”

“No,” I replied again, reconciling the answer to my conscience by saying to myself that it

was not the scar, but the effect it would have upon her that drove me to the wall.

She put a hand round my neck, and tried to turn my face to her, but I would not move.

“Davie, is it the mark upon yer brow that makes ye turn yer face from me?”

I turned round on her, and cried :

“And if it is, is it not enough? Would any man get a scar like this and not cry out?”

“I ken many a man that would be glad of a scar got like it.”

“Then they’re welcome to it,” I said.

“To me it’s the best feature on yer face, Davie,” she said, kindly and cousinly. (I minded afterwards that it was said cousinly, but at that moment I thought otherwise.)

“Then I’ll no part with it!” I cried.

“And I’ll aye think it the best,” she went on. “For it was got for the sake of my father.”

It was I who now looked at her straight and stedfast in the eyes for a moment or two, and then said slowly :

“Ay, Rose, for the sake of yer father.”

Her eyes met mine, and then the eyelids

sank demurely, and turning away she went from the room.

I got up in fair good heart, and as I shoved a leg into my breeches, thought to myself that even a scar on my face was a blessing to me, if it was more than merely a scar in my maid's eyes.

CHAPTER XVIII.

I GET PROMOTED.

ONCE I had got up and about, my recovery was quick, and it was no more than ten days after regaining consciousness from the delirium that I announced my intention of starting work again.

The scare of the Pest had subsided. It had been confined mercifully to the one case, and when that was buried, and no more signs of it appeared, the folk trooped merrily back into Anstruther.

I looked for them to take more precautions about the cleanliness of the town, but I did not know the breed. Maybe for a week or two the streets were freer from filth, and the commoner folks' faces showed more of their natural complexion ; but after that gradually their efforts dwindled away, till at last the

town became no better nor worse than its neighbours.

Rose, indeed, laboured hard among the womankind, to bring them to a proper sense of their danger; but her efforts met with little reward, for, where folks' ease is in question, reformers are aye looked upon with slight favour, and the force of their words annulled by force of habit.

The Council, urged on by Simon, passed some grand measures; but a town cannot be cleansed by Act of Parliament, and that was the furthest they got. One of their measures especially found great favour in the eyes of the people, and it was to the effect that the filth on the streets would be granted free of charge to any man who cared to carry it away, and utilise it for manure or like purpose.

"Now," said the folk to themselves, "that's something like a measure, for it cleans the streets and leaves our pouches alone."

It was a good proposal, if some one had taken advantage of the Council's generosity; but as this never took place, the Act, on the whole, could hardly be called a complete

success. But they were not to know beforehand of this; and so, having satisfied their consciences, the Council rested from their labours and waited, and waited so long in such good content that they forgot for what they were waiting, and even the cause of their wait. The hand of the Council is aye apt to wander when it starts in the direction of the pouch.

When I spoke to Simon of returning to work, he was for me to take a longer rest, but I was keen to be in harness once more.

“Weel, if ye maun, ye maun,” Simon said at last. “Ye’ll have mind, maybe, that I said, when you first came, that we would either mak’ a spoon or spoil a horn of ye. Ye’ll be glad to ken that I think ye’re makin’ a grand spoon—a better spoon than I ever hoped for. There will be no more porter’s work for ye, Duras, ye’ve risen above all that kind of thing; but mind ye, for all that, it was the best kind of beginning ye could have made. So ye’ll start in the counting-house the morn, and if ye get on as well there as ye’ve done already, in the course of time there may be higher things for ye than a clerk’s stool.”

This was grand news, and I told him that.

“No more than ye deserve, lad,” he replied, kindly. “A man that grudges neither his time nor his body for his master’s service has a right to look for reward at his master’s hands.”

I was taken aback by his warmth, for Simon was never a man to speak much at all, far less warmly, and with a good deal of emotion I told him I had never deserved half what he gave me.

“I’m the best judge of that, Duras,” he said, and then paused for a little in thought.

He gave a look or two in my direction, and appeared undecided about some matter in his mind, till at length he came to some decision, and said to me :

“Since it seems, Duras, that we’re to be much together, it’ll maybe be as well to give ye some kind of knowledge of what manner of man I am. With another man I would have allowed him to find out for himself, and if he judged aright, well and good; if wrongly, then the worse for him. But for you I have, as well I might, a kindliness. Now, lad, I am an ill man at taking favours. I canna rest quietly under them at all. They disturb me, and

render me one minute too kind and the next too cruel. Maybe poring over ledgers with their eternal *pro* and *contra* has made me deal with life as with an account. Whatever be its cause, at any rate that's what it comes to. For the repose of my mind I am forced to balance a favour *pro* with a like favour *contra*, and close the account. It's a hard creed—some would call it a cruel creed—but it's mine, and that's all I'm trying to mak' ye understand. There's no generosity in it, and there's little Christianity ; but when a man cannot rely on his generosity, and sair misdoubts his Christianity, there might be a worse way found than mine, which, at least, gives measure for measure, if it does not give a luck-penny into the bargain. Do ye get a grip of what I mean, Duras ? ”

“Faith, and I would be dull if I did not, Maister Carter,” I replied. “Between man and man with no sentiment coming atween, it comes to this. For a favour which ye overrate, ye do me a great kindness, and all ye ask in return is that I should not calculate on further favours until I have earned them. Ye pay me

with a hundredfold, and ask that I should call the account square."

"I'm glad to see ye have the sense I gave ye credit for, lad," said Simon, giving me one of those rare smiles which seldom came to him save when he was with Rose.

"Then we start clear again, Duras?" he added, rising.

"Faith and we don't," I cried; "for if your ledger shows it balanced, mine shows a great sum to your credit, and, by heaven, Simon Carter, I'll work it off."

"Duras," he said, "I am a wee feared ye'll never mak' a guid business man. Ye are too warm-hearted—and kind," he added, giving me a little touch on the shoulder familiarly as he went out.

Now, I think I must still have been a little lightheaded, for there and then I rushed up to the room where Rose was, and, with a wild dance, told her the good news.

"I'm a clerk, Rose, a clerk!" I cried, dancing the more vigorously.

"Oh, good lad!" she answered back, with such warmth that I threw restraint aside and,

catching her round the waist, made her, in nowise tardy, join me in my dance of triumph.

In our mad circuit we had just got near the door, when, of a sudden, it opened, and Simon Carter appeared.

“My faith,” he cried, with a twinkle in his eye, “this is bonny, bonny conduct for a clerk and daughter of mine !”

I stood stockstill like a sheep, but Rose ran up to him and, throwing her arms round his neck, cried :

“Oh, father, ye’re a dear !”

He gave a look down at her, and said :

“And ye’re an arch-hypocrite, Rose.”

Then he glanced in my direction with a look in his eyes which, ever recurring, I could never fathom, and at this time as little as before.

CHAPTER XIX.

CAPTAIN IVY MANNERS.

Now I must pass over, with only a few words, the two years that followed. Years they were to me of hard work and of little play, but years of success in the business. The smattering of French and Dutch that my mother and father had instilled into me (little dreaming at the time they would ever be put to so much use) now stood me in good stead, so that from a junior's stool I rose to a higher, and from thence to a higher still, in that I was removed from the ordinary work of the clerk and given the position of confidential clerk to Simon. It was a difficult post to fill; but by dint of hard, unwearying work, I had the fortune to gain his favour, and, by-and-by, found myself gradually gaining importance in the house.

With Rose it was different. For all the rise

I had made in her esteem, I was not a whit nearer her heart. I need not say that so bluntly, for whiles I thought she did love me a little bit, but oftener I had good reason to know she did not. Nearly every night I laid me down in my bed wishing that I had been brought up among women, that I might have a knowledge of their ways.

My mother was the most honest woman on earth; she had no "kinks" in her way of thinking, and little change in her thoughts. When she said a thing, one had not to spend weary weeks puzzling out her meaning, and if she meant it, and if she meant it not, why she had said it. But the wondrous ways of Rose made my mother's life an ill guide to follow, or rather no guide at all; so I had to find my way as best I might, by my leelane self, and a dreary work I had of it, though none so dreary at times.

Now, I have heard far-travelled sailors tell of seas that were pleasanter than heart could imagine, so that lulled by the long swell, and idle by reason of the fair winds, they would give themselves over to dreams. Suddenly,

perchance in the night, the murmur of the wind among the sheets would grow shriller, like the cry of one of our coast birds at the approach of dirty weather, and ere hand could be stretched out to lighten her spread of canvas, over the bit barque would heel, till the waters seemed banked up over her bulwark. If, by God's grace, her masts went in time, she would recover, and go before the gale, a helpless hulk, driving no man could say where.

I had been sailing in pleasant seas, for me, with all the little canvas I possessed in full spread, and had even thought myself within hail of my port, when Captain Ivy Manners came by and made a full mess of my poor barque.

Fool that I was, I heeded not, or heard not, the shrill whistle of warning in the air, but meeting him on the quay one day, fell into pleasant intercourse with him, and was mightily entertained by his stories and knowledge of far seas and countries, of the trade that was open to the daring trader, of jewels and gold to be purchased for a toy. I will not deny I was taken with the man. In every point he was

the facsimile of my ideal man, an ideal that every young man sets up in his heart, and tries to live up to, if only in appearance. Daring to rashness, but with a judgment ever as quick as his sword, possessed of an imagination that led him out of the dull and ordinary ways of traders, and which had nothing of the wild dreamer's vain speculation in it, but which cast aside by instinct all that was visionary, and acted only on those ideas which were based on grounds giving at least some hope of happy fulfilment.

Such a character did Captain Manners display to me on our first meeting, and, looking back, I think there was little wonder I did my best to further our acquaintance. In appearance he was what women would call handsome, and what men would call "well set up." If he lacked a few inches of my height, his limbs were in better proportion, and gave promise of a quickness in action that would take a man further than mere strength. His head was very small, and this gave a delicacy to his features which added to their beauty, if the word were applicable to a man such as he. His face was

not tanned and weather-beaten as his voyage might have caused, but, instead, had simply turned to a dark brown, while its softness was untouched. His eyes were black, and while he spoke very brilliant; but, if he were thinking, they quickly lost their brilliancy and became almost lustreless, lending an air of melancholy that was strangely fascinating in one of such an energetic disposition.

After one or two such meetings, he besought me in a merry way to lend him my company as much as possible, as solitude was a weary comrade to an old tar waiting till his sister ship would come, adding that "it was seldom such two chance comrades sailed together as well as we." Accordingly I made him acquainted with Simon Carter, and he, seeing in my companion a means of gaining some knowledge of a trade that was then in its infancy, made much of him, and soon Captain Manners was a welcome visitor at Simon's house.

It was like a play to sit and hear Rose and Captain Manners breaking lances across the table at each other; at quip and quibble he was nearly her match, and for long enough I

could only sit and laugh, admiring her quick wit and wondering at his cleverness where I was so dull. Simon would sit and listen also, sometimes joining in a sally, but more often changing the subject to one of greater interest to a merchant, and willingly was he answered. Manners, with as spirited an utterance as when he talked to Rose, would tell us of his wonderful voyages, of the strange doings of people of whom we before had heard little, of sights to him common, but to us nearly incredible, and ever running through his talk a thread of gold appeared that added zest to two of the listeners. Even Rose was silent, and listened open-eyed as to the magic of his talk. That wondrous El Dorado was unveiled to us, and the madness of its beauty and wealth crept into our brains. What power to the possessor thereof ! Before us was a man who had seen it, ay, and had brought back more than the image of it with him, for casually and with little ostentation he showed us specimens of stones and trinkets of gold, of which, according to his story, he had enough to make more needless, if once his consort came into port.

For days and days he held us spellbound, and I, with my drunken imagination, never gave a glance to the friendship that was gaining ground fast between Rose and Manners. The awakening came with the knowledge that Rose was fonder of a quiet talk with him in the window-seat than of a merry joust at the table with their mock weapons of quip and crank.

Sudden was the flitting of my dreams of gold when the dream of my heart was in jeopardy, and bitter draught was the knowledge that I myself had brought my rival into the house and to her.

Once suspicion is aroused it is soon nourished, and a tale one of the maids told me regarding the long visits of the Captain to the house when business called Simon and me elsewhere increased my fear. I could do little to prevent these occurring, but at least managed to shorten them by well-timed interruptions.

Sometimes when the night was mild for the spring of the year, Manners would propose a walk to Rose, and if she consented, though uninvited, I accompanied them. I found and knew myself to be anything but an addition to

their conversation; yet I persevered, for I am nothing if not dogged. To me each of these walks was like a journey through the Pit of Torment, for among two such good talkers I made but a sorry appearance. I could take no offence at the Captain, for invariably if I broke in upon their conversation he would be silent and listen to my observation, however slight, with attention, reply to it courteously, and wait for a further remark from me. If none was forthcoming, he would resume his subject where he had left off.

There is no better weapon than politeness. It is a blade of a most perfect temper and balance in good hands, and Captain Manners was a master in its use. At each outbreak on my part I felt I was given the attention that perchance a spoiled child receives from its doting parents, and then placed back in my proper position. At each set-back the demon within me raged the louder, and grew more incapable than ever of wielding a like weapon. Like a bull I could only roar and make a blind rush into notice, where I had better have remained in silence. All this I knew, yet could

not act upon by reason of my jealousy. All this I knew, yet I was led further and further into the part of one who will neither listen quietly to a conversation nor add to its pleasure, and still I persisted and laid myself open as a target for the frowns and snubs of Rose. What sort of figure I cut at that time even yet I little care to look back upon, and if the contemplation gives me pain now you can have some knowledge of what the actual undergoing of it was like.

CHAPTER XX.

THINGS COMING TO A HEAD.

ONE night I fairly lost heart during the walk in the evening that had now become a custom with the three of us. Repeated jeers from Rose at my unfortunate remarks had driven me mad, and, like a sulky dog, I stopped suddenly, announcing my intention of returning homeward.

“But we had settled to go as far as the Bear’s Cliff,” said Rose.

“Don’t let my going shorten your walk,” I replied, stiffly.

“But it will,” she cried.

“Why ? ” I asked.

“Because we would have lost our sheep-dog.”

“That’s an ill word from ye, cousin.”

“Do ye no think it’s kinna true, Davie ? ”

“Was it for ye to say it ? ” I asked, warmly.

Meanwhile Captain Manners had been laugh-

ing quietly to himself since the "sheep-dog" had been mentioned, and, with a fever of rage in my blood, I turned to him.

"Ye seem amused, Captain Manners!" I cried.

"I am that," he replied, quietly.

Forcing myself to a like calm, I said :

"Might I ask what ye find so very amusing?"

He reflected for a moment or two, and then said in his ordinary conversational tone :

"It's sometimes difficult to exactly tell what it is that amuses one, but it was 'sheep-dog' that made me laugh."

"Ay, was that so?" I asked, between my teeth.

"It was that, Duras."

"Takin' it in connection wi' me, maybe?" I asked.

"My dear Duras, not by any means," he replied.

I waited for him to go on, but as he did not I said :

"Maybe you would favour me wi' the cause of your amusement, then, and we might help ye in the laughing?"

"Speak for yourself, Davie!" cried Rose,

angrily. "I have no desire to hear it. Surely ye'll let your flock bleat without needing a minute account of what caused it?"

"Maybe ye would favour me wi' the cause of your amusement, Captain Manners?" I repeated.

"Willingly, my dear Duras," he said, heartily. "*Most* willingly will I do so, though I fear me that I am easier raised to merriment than you are; in which case ye may see little humour in the story. It was about a sheep-dog——"

"Another?" Rose cried, bitterly.

"About a sheep-dog who took so much care of one particular sheep in his master's flock, that what with following it about always, and aye barking at it, the silly sheep-dog fairly drove the poor sheep crazy; so that one day, to be rid of it, the sheep jumped over a cliff into the sea. Of course ye know that where one of the flock go the rest are apt to follow, so the next sheep took the same airt; and guidness only knows what would have happened to the rest had not the shepherd come up at the time and knocked the silly sheep-dog dead with his staff."

“Ha ! ha ! ha !” I laughed. “It’s a grand story, and nae wonder ye were amused, Captain. But ye hae stopped laughing. Have ye lost the humour of it already ? Maybe I could help ye to see it again ?” I added, going nearer to him.

“My thanks to ye,” he said, quietly. “Perhaps I will ask your assistance on some other occasion; but at present, remember there is a lady present who has lost interest in the story.”

“Your pardon, Cousin Rose,” I said, bowing to her, and offering her my arm. “Shall we be stepping homeward ?”

My dull brain was quickened at the first sign of action. It was ever thus with me. As long as the road was the dreary turnpike of talk I was as ungainly and slow as a three-legged horse; but let it once change to action, then up hill and down dale I went as spirited as a four-year-old.

Even though Rose refused my proffered arm it did not damp me in the least, and even though her words showed me how offended she was they fell harmlessly ; for my heart was glowing with the thought that, churl though I

had been in conversation, I could prove myself a man when words changed to action.

“Ay, I think we might as well step hame,” she said. “The night air seems neither improving to Davie’s conversation nor to his politeness.”

We turned our steps homeward, and never a look nor word did Rose give me; but, walking with her proud, bonny head held high, she gave her whole attention to her talk with Manners.

What did I care? My head was too full of hatred to the man to be affected. Surely as the stars were above me, I promised myself the pleasure of running him through the neck that very night. I was mad against the man. Up to this in every point he had had the best of me. Up to this he had managed to put me in the wrong in her sight, for ever relegating me to the place of an ignorant intruder. Oh, but the anticipation was sweet! I mused on it long; then, though unsatiated, I began to give a little more heed to what they were saying.

“But, Captain Manners,” said Rose, lightly, “in all your stories there is never an appearance of the Spanish girls, who, I am told, are

wondrously beautiful in this El Dorado. Why is this ? Come, now, confess."

"Man had never so charming a confessor," he replied, gazing at her with his great black eyes admiringly (and I hated him the more for the look). "But alack for my reputation as a story-teller, I am no maiden-killer, and,"—here his voice lost its lightness of tone, and became deep and low with a grim suffering echoing in it, so that even I could almost have believed it true,—“and when I love, I love till death. Ye say true, I tell not of Spanish maids, and if ye knew all ye would well know why."

"Forgive me, Captain Manners," said Rose, softly.

"Nay, Mistress Rose," he said, smiling, and his voice still remaining the same. "Pain on my part is no excuse for neglecting your slightest desire. Ye have asked me for a story of a Spanish maid. I will tell ye one, only forgive me if it is short and the words blunt. Three years ago it was, but three years are little to bury the sorrow in. I met her in Carthagená. My ship lay quiet in a bay some fifty miles up the coast. I speak

Spanish, and, as ye see, could well pass for a Spaniard in appearance. My mission was forgot in my love for her. Rumour rose that I was not of their religion, but fast as it grew, my love for her grew faster; and—she loved me. I quieted the rumours for a time.”

“How?” asked Rose, sadly, guessing, I thought, the manner of it.

“My love for her was stronger than my faith. To gain time I became a proselyte.”

“Ah!” said Rose, with an intaking of breath.

“I tell ye all, ye see,” he said, sadly.

“Go on,” she replied, in almost whispers.

“And one gave witness that I was still unorthodox, and we fled. Fifty miles to my ship, and we went twenty the first day. The bed that was to be our bridal bed was on the banks of the Santa Maria. We had been closely watched, however, and ere even the sun went down they were upon us. Three Spaniards and some Indians. The cowards would not come to me, but cried to the Indians to shoot. They drew their bows and shot. My love stepped before, and I was unharmed, but she was dead. Something snapped in my brain. I stayed not

with her, but in my madness drew my sword and ran into them. No weapon touched me, though many were aimed, and I slew till they fled in terror of the madman. Unmolested I buried my love and gained my ship."

His voice had been low and deep, never changing in its monotony, as if he had laid a strong restraint upon it.

When he had finished Rose made no sign, save that a deep sigh came from her at the end.

"With her I buried all that was dear in life to me," he went on. "And my heart also, I had thought—till now."

The two last words were said in a whisper so low that I, who was never meant to hear them, could hardly have been sure of their purport if I had not seen the motion of his lips.

Seemingly Rose had not heard them, for she made no sign, but walked on in silence until we came to the door.

She wished the Captain a guid-e'en there, and then waited for me to come in.

"I'll be in in a little, Rose," I said.

"Come just now," she said, masterfully.

"I have business," I replied, turning away.

"Doubtful business it must be at this time of the night," she jeered.

"So be it," I said, taking a step or two.

Her hand was on my shoulder in an instant.

"Is it with Captain Manners?" she asked.

"I'll tell ye when I come back," I said.

"Davie, let bygones be bygones."

"Guid-night," I said again.

"You're blind, Davie," she said, very softly.

"But no deaf, Rose," I said.

I could not fathom the depth of her remark, and answered with the words that came first to my tongue.

"And no dumb, Davie, and that's the pity o't," she answered, with a return to her ill-humour. "Will ye no come in, Davie? Have ye no regard for my name, that ye should be so quick to connect it with drawn swords in the dark?"

"It's no that dark," I replied, absently, watching Manners, who was just turning the corner.

"When I ask ye to stay, Davie, I think ye might," she said, with a pleading sort of tone

in her voice that was strangely comforting to me, though I hardly gave any attention to the words.

“In this I must have my ain way,” I said, and went from her.

She came by my side for a step or two, with her hands busy on my coat; but so intent was I on my revenge, that it was not till next morning I saw a little knot of ribbon of her favourite colour had found a resting-place in a buttonhole of my coat. I stood wondering if I had been sleep-walking, as was once my habit as a boy; then I wondered if this was what she had done when we were parting. And for long enough afterwards I wondered what had made her do it.

CHAPTER XXI.

MY DUEL WITH IVY MANNERS.

WHEN I made up to Manners, he was just at the door of his lodgings. At the sound of my footsteps he turned round and said in a surprised tone, "Duras?"

"Ye seem surprised," I said. "Did ye no expect me?"

"No," he answered, simply; then added, "but ye're always welcome."

"We are ower late now, Captain Ivy Manners, there's nae need to pick and choose our words; in faith, little need of words at all."

"Ye're speaking in riddles, my dear Duras," he said.

"What!" I cried, "after what was said this night, d'ye mean to say ye ken na my errand?"

"Ye're pardon, my dear Duras, if I am stupid," he replied, "but what *did* happen this very night?"

“ I was called a sheep-dog ! ” I said, hotly.

“ Well, but was it I who said it ? ” he expostulated, gently.

“ No,” I said.

“ Then how can I be affected with the matter ? ” he said, easily, even in his cool, gentlemanly manner, that drove the blood to my head, because I could not break through the mask.

“ But ye laughed,” I said.

“ I admit it,” he said, “ and still I can find no offence to ye in my laughter since I gave the satisfaction of explaining the cause. I am sorry ye found the story not to your taste.”

“ The story, as a story, was well enough, but the application of it has offended me bitterly.”

“ Application ? ” he asked. “ What application ? ”

We might have gone on for all night with this wordy skirmish, and very probably I would never have caused him to lose his temper, so I brought the matter to a close.

“ It requires a tremendous power of words to mak’ ye draw,” I said, clearly and suddenly.

His eyes lost their look of calm insolence,

and he darted at me a glance that showed what manner of man lay beneath the gentlemanly skin. Then, in a moment, the eyes resumed their calmness.

“My bit blade is seldom sweart to come at first call,” he said. “But man, Duras, I had a kind of liking for ye as a comrade, and would be glad to do ye a service.”

“Troth, if that is all that holds ye back,” I cried, “ye needna hesitate, for the greatest service ye could do me is to come with me to a quiet spot and hae a bit play with the swords.”

“Well, if ye’re determined to fasten the quarrel on me,” he said, “I suppose I must give ye the opportunity.”

Now I had remarked a pleasant little stretch of shore where the sand was firmer to the feet than ordinary, and as it was free of the town I led the Captain thither. Never a word passed between us on our way, and when we arrived there, we stripped our coats off in silence and to the work we went.

The stars were clear, and the light they gave was sufficient, if barely so, for our purpose.

At the first few cautious passes, good fencer

though I knew myself, I found in Captain Manners I had got my equal, if not my master. Light and deft his every action was, with curious foreign tricks in his play that made me take good heed to my guard. Though I knew it might cost me dear, I could not but admire the science with which he utilised to the utmost the particular advantage of his limbs; for, though I was longer in the reach than he, and taller, heavier, and more muscular, by his quick realisation of these features he was able to neutralise them by the method of his tactics.

I fought for a time very carefully until I could get at an understanding of my opponent's style and his weakest points, and came to the conclusion that his wrist, supple though it might be, was a little weak. Accordingly, I attacked but little, and when I did I thrust strongly, but in the main let him do the most of the fighting, trusting in my strength to outstay him.

He must have seen through my idea, for presently he began to talk, meaning, I suppose, if possible, to make me lose in coolness what I gained in temper—a method that is foreign to

our own mode of duels, where nothing else but the clash of steel on steel and the hard breathing of the swordsmen is heard. In ordinary affairs, at times I may be passionate enough, but in fencing never. Little use was I at the first when my master took me in hand ; but even then he discovered my temperament, and had done his best to make it keep pace with my gathering knowledge of the art, and with success too. So I could afford to let Manners talk, though every covert sneer should have stung me to the quick had not revenge for all made his immediate words a trifle in the weighing.

“Ye’ll observe, Duras, this ploy’s of your own making. What ye mean by it I ken to be a mistake. Think ye that she cares for me as much as she cares for your little finger? Perhaps ye think we have been ower much together lately? Well, we’ve had fine times of it. But d’ye ken whose name was oftenest on her lips, Duras? I think ye can guess. It was yours, Davie. It was Davie did this, and Davie can do that, till I was fair sick of the name!”

I got in a strong thrust here, which he parried

well ; but, methought, hardly so strong as at first.

“ Did ye not hear the story I told to-night ? Can ye think I would have told the maid that I had loved so well already, if I had meant to sue for her heart ? Think ye that she would have one whose heart was dead ? Nay, and ye know it, too. What she desires is the first love of some country lad, who will ne’er think of worshipping other than at her shrine. Ye know it, Duras, that what she would prize is such a first love—a heart that has never had the chance of being touched by other than she : a heart to be desired, Duras, though some would think it a trifle raw. Can ye think I would have told her my story, Duras, and me knowing that ? But perhaps ye were not listening to my poor tale ? Maybe ye heard it not ? ”

“ I heard more than ye imagine,” I said, slowly, enraged none; but simply to taunt him with the knowledge that his finessing was none so clever after all.

“ Did ye so ? ” he said, quickly; and, though I thought his wrist was tired, of a sudden he

stooped a little forward—with a trick unknown to me, he engaged my sword for a second, and next moment I felt it twisted from my hand with a great wrench.

Though the manner of it was unknown to me, yet Jock Hay in one of our talks had warned me of the possibility of it, and the attitude of the swordsman whom he had seen make it. Consequently, though I was unable to prevent it, yet I was warned by Captain Manners' position to expect something of the kind, and was quick to spring back to avoid the accompanying thrust. He touched me in the arm, and but slightly. My sword lay on the sand a few feet from me, and I sprang to try and regain it. Manners made for it also, but quick as thought I dealt a blow with my fist on his right shoulder that landed fairly and made him stagger back a few paces.

Why he had not tried to kill me in the moment I was unarmed I could not understand. Probably he deemed himself so secure in his advantage that he did not think it needful to have blood on his hands that might interfere with his plans. At any rate it was his mistake,

for, with a hurried scramble, I caught up my blade and was his match again.

My blow had been severe, for while one could count thirty his right arm hung limp by his side, while with his left hand he kept continually chafing the bruised shoulder.

Then he came forward and we crossed blades again. His eyes glared at me viciously. All the nobility of his face was gone, and it seemed more the face of an angry devil.

“Outwitted by a fool,” he muttered. “God in heaven, but ye shall pay dearly for that blow ! I meant to chasten ye for your insolence in daring to come between my fancy and me, but now I will kill you. Dost hear, knave ? Kill you !”

I answered him back never a word. The fighting had turned to dead earnest. His wrist was a little tired, his shoulder barely so lithe in action as it had been; but now I saw him put forth his whole skill into the fight, and I blessed the chance that had made it come so late, for had he fought at first as he fought now, surely I had been a dead man.

He, too, was silent now. With the exertion

of the few minutes since the recommencement the sweat started out on his forehead. I began to make more play. To gain a little time to recover the full use of his arm he gave back a pace or two. I pressed him hardly and again he gave back. Stoutly I thrust, and never for a moment lending him the chance of engaging my sword in another such trick as he had already played me.

A glorious rush of blood through my body kept each nerve and sinew in perfect action. Few moments in life are so delicious as when one begins to feel that victory is at hand in a hard-fought struggle.

Manners gained relief for a second and changed his sword from his right to his left hand. Some swordsmen there are who can do this and fight as well, and, from Manners' action, I feared it was so in his case.

I pressed all the more hardly, and one other pace did he retreat. From the narrow stretch of sand the fight had carried us, and his foot landed on a small slimy rock. He staggered for a moment, and might have recovered ; but I seized the chance, and thrust straight and

strong to him. His guard was useless. The point of my sword struck over his heart—but *did not pierce*.

My blade snapped through two inches from the point. The blow had caught him as he staggered, and he fell backwards. His head struck against a rock with a sickening thud, and he lay quiet.

I stood over him, and tore the shirt from his breast. As I had guessed when my blade broke, the foul rogue wore a shirt of mail of the finest links (finer I have never seen) under the cambric.

He lay at my mercy, worsted in a fair fight, and worsted in a foul. Unconscious he lay there at my feet : a traitor against all the laws of gentlemen, whatever he might be besides.

Would I strike ? I asked myself, and I had up-lifted my sword, when I turned away. I would have no such carrion blood on my blade. So I left him where he lay; the foulness of his treachery had sickened me. I knew not whether he was ill hurt or little hurt, nor at the moment did I care.

CHAPTER XXII.

I FALL IN WITH JOCK HAY AGAIN.

HEROICS do not suit plain traders, and I soon found this out, for when I got back to the house who should be awaiting my return but Simon Carter ; and he was an ill man to keep waiting.

“It’s maist extraordinary, Duras,” he cried, “that ye, of all men, should have chosen this night for your gallivanting ! What’s kept ye ?”

“I’m no sure whether to tell ye or no,” I said.

“Would it dae ony guid if I kent ?” he said.

“I canna see where it would mak’ a differ,” I replied.

“Then dinna tell me, Duras,” he said ; “for with the press of matters for the morn, my head’s just as fou as it can be. Tak’ haud o’ these,” he cried, passing on to me a number of papers and books. “I’ve waited on ye for twa

hours, during which time I hae tried to gae ower them mysel' but hae failed. They're some of your new-fangled book-keeping, and I can mak' neither head nor tail o' them. I've mislaid your statement anent the gold that's coming frae Edinburgh the morn to ship in the *Marie*. I can lay my hand on it naewhere, so ye maun just buckle to and mak' me a new ane."

I looked a little blank at his request, for it was a good three hours' work, and even as we spoke the watchman cried the midnight hour.

"I canna help it," he replied, in answer to my look. "Ye ken as well as I dae that the convoy will be here at six the morn, and I'll need it then. Come and I'll gie ye a hand."

"I'll manage it fine myself, Maister Carter," I said, for I wished for a minute or two's space in which to put my clothes to rights, and to put a bit plaster on my arm.

From a duel to a wearisome desk is a good step, and it was in none so hearty a frame of mind that I began my work. However, it had got to be done, for, as he said, the *Marie* was to sail early in the next day, and he with it,

carrying on board of her a more precious cargo than had ever sailed out of the Roads before.

To make this matter plain, I will have to go further into detail than I would wish; but folk can ye pass over the next few words and take it for granted that the *Marie* was to sail for Anstruther with over 40,000 marks' worth of coin and ingot on board, and Simon was to go in charge of it.

Now the reason for this was, that a long winter of extreme cold had frozen the Danube, and even now it was doubtful if a ship could make her way in, but the merchants who had joined Simon in the charter had resolved to try. The custom was (as the custom is yet, I believe, while I write) for the Scots merchant to give certain bills in payment of his purchase in the Lowlands, and when he had returned to Scotland, to sell the goods. The moneys that he had then gained he carried with him to the Lowlands on his next visit, and redeemed his bills in exchange for the gold. Then he was at liberty to make new purchases, since his credit was thus restored.

The uncommonly severe frost had, however,

interrupted their regular custom, and the bills were now more than overdue. Great inconvenience was also caused by the stoppage of new purchases, so that, on the whole, it was no wonder that they were keen to get the matter clear, for a merchant's good name is in exact proportion to the strength of his credit.

Sundry ships had aforesaid suffered from the attacks of pirates, that were anything but uncommon visitors round our shores, and the great sum to be transported had made the merchants so cautious that they had taken counsel among themselves. The outcome of their meeting was the charter of Simon's boat the *Marie*, and also one of the King's warships, *The Murray*, as a consort to guard the *Marie* from harm. On board the *Marie* were to be placed all the moneys that were due. More than a dozen merchants had joined in the company, mainly of Anstruther and the neighbouring towns, but some from the length of Edinburgh.

For the greater ensurement of safety the scheme had been kept a secret from all outsiders, and even among the servants of the

merchants none knew of it save they who were to be trusted. The gold from Edinburgh was only to be sent at a time so near the sailing that, though the arrival of the precious cargo and its convoy of well-armed men might excite remark, and from its character let the secret out, yet it would be at too late a date to make the knowledge of advantage to any one who might be inclined to give information to the pirates of the contents of the *Marie's* hold.

Roughly, that was how matters stood, and why I was wearily blinking over my books into the small hours.

At last I totalled up my statement, and finding it correct, locked up the books and staggered to bed, too tired to give more than a thought to Captain Manners and his hard couch.

I was awakened by Simon coming into my chamber in the morning. The broad light of day was streaming in by the window, betokening a late hour in the day for my arising; so, in confusion at my tardiness, I sprang up.

“I was in for ye at six, Duras,” said Simon. “But you were sleeping so deep that I couldna find it in my heart to rouse ye.”

“ Did ye get the paper ? ” I asked.

“ Ay.”

“ But ye were to have sailed afore this ! ” I cried, anxiously.

“ And canna weel sail before the complement of their cargo,” said Simon, drily. “ And that’s what I’ve come to ye about. The convoy from Edinburgh is no here yet. Now, I dinna wish to let mair folk into the secret than I can help, for fear we are detained longer in the port than we ken of; so I want ye to get a horse saddled and ride up the road till ye meet the convoy, and hasten them here by all that’s in your power.”

“ If ye get a horse saddled for me, I’ll be ready to mount as soon as it comes round,” I said.

“ Best break your fast, lad,” said Simon, going to the door. “ The next tide is no till seven o’clock, and gin ye canna bring them in time to catch the present ane, let them dwaddle along the road as much as ye like. It’ll gie rise to less remark if they come in here about five o’clock, than leaving them lounging about the town all the day. Two hours will be plenty of time to check the moneys.”

One of the maids gave me some breakfast, and of Rose I saw nothing, save that, as I was riding away, I thought I caught a glimpse of her face at an upper window.

I rode on for three hours, expecting every moment to catch a sight of the horses, but it was not till I had got near Dysart that I met them. To my surprise and delight, who should be in command of the convoy but Jock Hay, accompanied by a corps of six dour, wiry old war dogs !

“ Man, Jock, but I’m glad to see ye ! ” I cried out to him.

“ Duras,” he said, in astonishment, “ I was half in hopes I might see ye, but I never thought of seeing ye here. Where are ye bound for ? ”

“ I’ve just come to misca’ ye for a’ the loitering deevils upon earth, muckle Jock Hay. What has kept ye ? ”

“ Dinna blame me, Duras,” he replied. “ It was nane o’ my fault. Ane o’ the merchants in Edinburgh, and just the ane that has aye been urging the other anes no to be late, found it a gey difficult matter to get his ain gowd ready

in time. I doubt it has raxed the bit mannie sairly; but I've got the gowd, and I suppose that's a' ye care for?"

"And how's a' wi' ye, Jock? I've written ye several letters, did ye get nane o' them?"

"I did that, Duras," Jock said, assuming a confidential tone. "But the fact is, I hae got oot o' the way o' using a pen; and, man, I was aye saying to mysel'—'Never you mind, Jock, ane o' thae days ye'll be putting a leg ower your mare and takin' a bit daunder up and see Duras face to face, and that will be a hantle sicht better than scrape scrapin' awa' wi' a pen, doubtfu' o' what ye want to say, and mair doubtfu' if he'll mak' oot what ye have said. Sae, Duras, I aye fell a victim to that conceit, and sair has it held me in its fell grip.'"

"Hoo's the guidwife, Jock?" I asked.

"Oh, she's neither up nor doun the noo," said Jock, "but mair inclined to be doun," he added mystically. "Ye see there's twa bairns already, sonsy bit rampagin' chiels, and we took the liberty, Duras, o' ca'in' ane o' them 'Davie,' after ye."

And so the talk ran on, and a fine crack we

had o' it till we came to Largo, where we had some dinner.

It was about five o'clock when we arrived at Anstruther.

There was little time to be lost, so I had to let Jock fend for himself while I gave Simon a hand at the checking of the Edinburgh moneys.

It tallied all right, and, while Simon was saying good-bye to Rose, I got the cases slung on board the *Marie*.

Rose would fain have stayed by the ship till the last, but, as it was dark by that time, Simon bade her go home.

At last the ropes were cast off the *Marie*, and she swung clear of the quay. The sails caught the favouring breeze, and in a little while she was hid from our sight.

I turned to Jock with a sigh of relief, and to stretch our legs proposed to take a walk along the shore before turning in.

I was just finishing telling Jock the story of my duel with Captain Manners, when the noise of footsteps on the shingle made me stop for a moment. I know not why. I peered into the dusk, but could discern nothing, and thinking

myself a fool for being so cautious, I was just about to step out again, when a muffled cry came to my ears.

“What’s that?” cried Jock.

We stood still with ears alert.

There was a sound of a scuffle in front of us, then out on the night wind ran a cry of :

“Help, Davie!”

God! It was Rose’s voice. Even in my terror I felt my heart leap at the thought that mine was the name first on her lips in her dire need.

I gave a wild shout and sprang forward quickly, and through the darkness I saw Rose flying towards me, while after her came four or five seamen.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE RESCUE OF ROSE.

“CAN you fecht, Jock?” I cried.

“A wee bit,” said Jock, coming neck and neck with me in the mad spurt towards her.

“Then fecht, Jock,” I panted, “for this is *her*, mair to me than life or death.”

“Wha are the men?” Jock cried.

“Guid kens,” I replied, “but I suspect the worst—that this is ane of Captain Manners’ tricks.”

The new moon came out from behind a cloud, and shed a better light over the shore.

“Oh, my God! she’s down!” I cried, as Rose tripped and fell her length on the sand.

Jock and I were at our quickest, I thought; but at my words, he made a gallant effort and sprang ahead of me.

“We’re in time!” he cried, with a catch in his voice, like the choke of a drowning man

when he comes to the surface for the last time.

The blood was in my eyes, and my heart was like to burst its way out from under my ribs. For a moment the earth swam round, and then I managed to get a full deep breath that restored me and cleared my sight in time to see Jock's sword twinkle in the air. A ray of light seemed to spring out from his arm and light upon the neck of the seaman who stood over Rose's body. The blood spurted out from the man's jugular, so that both Jock and my love were drenched in this foul spray.

"Ane," bayed Jock, like a hound on the track. "Come on, ye cowards !" he cried to the rest, who hung back at the sight. "Come on, ye chasers of women, ye dogs of the street ! Ye're six to two now, and ye hang fire. Six rough-limbed tykes against twa simple. honest bodies, and ye hang fire. Come on, and we'll fight you for love, we'll fight ye for the maid, and God grant ye an easy crossing to hell, for ye'll have a sair time of it there !"

There was one behind the seamen, who now came among them, whom they seemed to fear

more than death itself, for at his first few words they burst towards us in a body.

I got alongside Jock, and dried the palm of my hand for a better grip; giving my soul up to God in a prayer that had few words in it but muckle meaning, for though I would rather have lived for Rose, I cared not a tester which way the fight went so long as she won clear.

When they were about six paces from us Jock let his sword-grip relax so that his blade hung from his wristlace, and pulling a pistol from his belt fired it into the heart of them. And one man sair regretted that he was there that night, for with a squeal this man sprang clean into the air and came down with his face into the sand. It was our luck that the man behind him tripped over his dead comrade, and so was delayed from taking part in the outset at the first.

“Twa !” yelled Jock. “Wha’s gaun to be the third ?” he cried to them with a great cordiality in his voice, that, strengthening as it was to me, was none so heartsome to them.

“What think ye o’ me ?” cried one of the seamen, with a cast in his eyes, getting a pace

in front of his comrades, and no difficult matter either, for they were slockened a little in their thirst for blood.

“Dod !” said Jock. “No muckle, if ye want my fair mind on’t,” and then their blades spoke.

At this time I was getting busy with two men on my side, who kept up a continual dance about me, so that it was all I could do to keep them from getting to our backs. It was no time for fancy work, nor for heavy striking either, inasmuch as it was only by a constant menace of the point of my sword at their breasts that I managed to keep them from coming to close quarters, where their short cutlasses might have brought the matter to a sudden close. The fourth man I had lost sight of, but I imagined he had gone wide of us a little so that he might come up behind.

“It maun be awfu’ to be troubled wi’ a squint like that,” I heard Jock cry to his opponent. “Dod, man, ye wad give yersel’ a fricht if ye saw yersel’ in the glass. I canna tell which way ye’re lookin’ at a’. Was that thrust meant for my wame or my neck? Yer een

were on my wame, but Lord, yer point was to my neck. Man, but ye're a brisksome bit fighter, but dae ye no think ye could manage a bit better if ye squinted nae mair ? ”

“ I might,” said the seaman, his rough nature entering into the keen joy of thrusts of steel and thrusts of humour.

“ I'm glad ye agree wi' me, for ye'll squint nae mair ! ” cried Jock, and with his words the clash of steel on steel ceased, and in its place there came a shearing sound ending in a short jar. A moment later a rustle in the sand as the body fell.

“ Three ! ” yelled Jock. “ Who's a' wi' ye, Duras ? Keep them aff a minute while I help the maid till her feet. Lord, but ye're up, are ye, my maidie ? Weel, bide ye close by and dinna stray, for there's something gaun on ahint us that's waur nor what's in front.”

The fellow who had stumbled now came up to Jock and engaged his blade.

“ Hech, but ye come late, man,” Jock cried. “ Hoo did ye leave yer friend ? I suppose ye ken ye're gaun to keep him company ? ”

“ Noo, my maidie, dinna spend a look on me,

but keep yer een fixed on Duras, and ye'll see a man fechtin'. It's a' cut and slash wi' me, but watch him, and ye'll see some guid judgment. We neither of us are quick wi' the tongue, but oh, maidie, in this warld talking's just like kitchen—tasty, but no nourishin'. But neither o' us are slow when 'Whingers oot !' is the cry, and just see the difference between the talker and the fechter !” cried Jock, pointing to where the man who had urged the seamen on stood, wrapped in his boat-cloak.

“I ken,” said Rose, brokenly, “and sair hae I rued my folly.”

“Rue it nane,” cried Jock; “this is just what Duras wanted, I firmly believe,—the chance to show what he's made o'.”

“Ah !” gasped Jock, a moment later. Rose screamed loudly in despair.

“Oh, he's down !”

“No a'thegither,” said Jock. “Fecht on, Duras. I'll maybe win oot yet.”

As he told me afterwards, his foot had caught on the dead man's body, and brought him to his knee. His spur was caught in the clothing so that he could not rise without the danger of

stumbling in the attempt. His opponent caught at the chance, and with sheer strength in downward head-cuts strove to break his guard.

Then I heard the report of a pistol at my side.

I gave up all hope, thinking that the man who had gone by was now upon us, but fought on dourly.

“Oh, brave lass !” cried Jock, rising quickly and coming to my side.

At his approach the two men drew back out of the ploy, and I had time to ask Jock a question.

“She’s a rare ane !” cried Jock. “She saw I was in straits, and the brave bit lassie drew the other pistol from my belt and shot him.”

“We seem to be clear now,” I said.

“Na !” cried Jock, sadly. “Look yonder.”

I turned my head, and between the town and us a party of seven sailors were approaching.

“I’ve kent it this minute or twa,” said Jock, “but I didna want to mak’ ye nervous. We’ll draw inshore a bit, think ye ?”

We had moved only a step when the two men began their attack again and compelled us to halt. The other body were rapidly

approaching. Jock gave a look round. The noise of the pistol shots had drawn one or two people to the shore, but they kept at a safe distance, for it was no quarrel of theirs. Had they known of Rose's presence, doubtless they would have come to our rescue; but they would but think it some private feud, and private feuds were ill things for the commoners to meddle with.

"Oh, for ane or twa o' my men!" sighed Jock. "They're never faur aff, somehoo, when there's a fecht on, but I doubt we're raither faur aff to mak' them hear. However, it'll dae nae harm."

He raised his great bellow of a voice with the cry :

"Hay's braw lads ! Hay's braw lads to him!"

Instantly there was a commotion among the spectators, and to our delight a hoarse voice echoed Jock's cry. A moment more and we saw one man run back to the town and one run to us. He came fast, but the sailors came faster.

"Run, Duras, wi' maidie !" cried Jock.

"I'm d——d if I will, Jock Hay !"

“So am I, Jock Hay !” cried Rose, and, oh, but I loved the maid doubly for her words.

“I’m Captain here,” cried Jock, sternly, “and I command ye both to retreat ! I’ll hold them for a minute and come after ye. Dinna be a gowk, Duras.”

I saw his plan was just feasible, and acted upon it. We ran back as fast as we could, until the two men were close upon us, and then Jock turned and stood them off. When he had a moment’s chance he gave back quickly, and thus enabled us to make about a hundred yards.

The other body, however, were approaching at an angle to our line of retreat, and coming faster than we, so at the proper minute Jock turned smartly round and ran to where I had taken my stand.

The man who had answered and run to Jock’s cry, came up a pace or two in front of the seven seamen. Thus we stood, for a moment three men against nine ; and at the rear of either party respectively, was Rose and the man who seemed to be in command of the seamen, and whom I suspected to be Manners himself.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE FIGHT WITH THE ROVERS AT THE SILVER DYKE.

WE had just settled our feet for the fight, if fight it could be called, for what were three men against ten, when I saw Jock stagger a little. His face was white as a clout.

“What’s wrong, Jock?” I whispered.

“I’m sick, Duras, sick as a lubber on his first voyage, and mair—I’m fear’t o’ death—and whit comes after,” he said, in a weak, whining voice.

“Jock!” I cried, aghast.

“Hell maun be an awfu’ place,” he continued. “Hae ye thought o’ the everlasting flames that’ll keep gnaw, gnawin’ awa’ at ye, and ye keenly conscious o’ every smart? I’m a sinfu’ man, and to hell I’ll gang when I die. God in mercy preserve us now, and let us win oot o’ this wi’ oor lives.”

“Jock,” I cried again, “for God’s sake be a man !”

“A man,” Jock cried, “a man ! Havena I been a man long enough ? Every man I’ve killt will rise up against me at that dread day, and point till me as his murderer. A man ! I fling awa’ the sword that endangers my chances o’ comfort in the world to come.”

He let his grip on his sword relax, and it dangled by the lace.

I turned away from the dread spectacle of a man overcome by his fears, weakened by his terror to physical sickness.

“God help us !” I cried. “It’s all over !”

The soldier who had joined us put his hand on my shoulder, and gave me a playful shake. His wrinkled, weather-beaten skin was stretched in an attempt at a reassuring smile.

“Younker,” he said, “did ye never see a man wi’ his fighting sickness on him ? Ye’re but young yet in the trade o’ hard knocks. Ance, twice, and thrice I’ve seen Jock Hay this way, and, oh ! but widows’ and sweet-hearts’ tears were plentifu’ at the end o’ it a’. Ye’ve seen him fight like a man, but watch him

now when the steel whistles, and ye'll see a demon. I've turned aside in a fright wi' vomiting like his, but, God ! I made them pay for every pang I suffered. D'ye ken this sickness leaves behind it the consciousness of having been a coward, and a man has to wipe out that in bluid afore he can sit down in peace again ? ”

While this was occurring in our party, a similar halt had been taking place in the other. Manners, as the man in the boat-cloak proved to be, had taken aside one of the men, and had been giving him some instructions seemingly, for now the man came forward, and began to speak.

“ Gie up the maid, and we'll let ye gang scot-free ! ” he cried.

None of us spoke, and after waiting while one could count a hundred, the man cried out again :

“ Fight for it, and not ane of ye will see the sun the morn ! ”

“ What's it to be, Jock ? ” I said to Hay. He was standing straighter now, but not a trace of blood was in his cheek, and his eyes,

generally calm, were now twitching and rolling in their sockets in a strange manner.

“There has been enough blood shed,” said Rose, quietly but firmly ; “I’ve made my bed, and I’ll lie on’t.”

“No sae fast, hinnie,” said Jock. “It tak’s mair nor ane to mak’ a bargain.”

“Was yer comrade running to gie the cry to the ithers, Knifie ? ” he asked of the soldier.

“That he was,” cried Knifie, “and he would not have far to run either, for, when we heard the shots, Gallows Dick and me wi’ the other four were a’ sitting in a change house near this end o’ the toun.”

“Are they drunk or sober ? ” asked Hay.

“’Twixt and between,” said Knifie, with a laugh. “In fine trim,” he added.

“If they would only come,” said Jock, longingly.

“Keep them talking, since they’re that way inclined,” replied the soldier.

“Man, that’s a guid idea ! ” cried Jock. “Haud them in play, Duras, wi’ that sleek tongue o’ yours, and we’ll maybe win oot the best yet.”

“What guarantee have we that ye’ll no turn on us as soon as ye have hold of the maid?” I asked the seaman.

He scratched his head, and pondered for a moment or two before answering.

“Guarantee!” he replied. “Guarantee, I ken o’ nane sae guid as the fact that we’ll be glad to see your backs wi’ as little bother as may be.”

“But if we hand her over,” I said, “what’s to happen to her?”

“Why, what every maid wants,” he replied, with a leer; “she’ll get a braw, braw man for a husband.”

“Meaning ——?” I asked.

“Just so,” he answered, evasively.

“Meaning Captain Ivy Manners?” I asked.

“Come now,” cried the seaman, roughly, in response to a whispered command from behind.

“Will ye give her up or not?”

“Give me time to consult my comrades,” I asked, in a pleading voice.

“I’ll give ye twa minutes, and at the end of that time if the maid is not with us, woe be to ye!” replied the man, as he joined the sailors.

“ Is there any sign of your men yet, Jock ? ”
I asked, quickly.

“ Man, I thought I saw a bit stir on the shore the noo, but I couldna be sure,” Jock whispered. “ They’re wily fellows, and quick i’ the uptak’, and if there’s a chance to be had they’re the men to tak’ it. Is that a hillock or just a rise ahint us, Duras ? ” said Jock, nodding to where the ground rose slightly about three hundred paces behind us, sometimes called the Silver Dyke.

“ It’s a hillock, Jock.”

“ Is it a lang ane ? ” he asked, quickly.

“ It runs to near the town end,” I replied.

“ Weel,” he said, excitedly for him, “ there’s just a chance my men will be coming to us, and keeping ahint the bit hill. It’s just a chance, but it would be like their usual tricks, sae I think we micht venture on a sudden rush towards it. We’ll no mak’ mair nor a hundred yards at the maist, but it will aye be something, and this is gaun to be a close fecht I’m telling ye. Here, maidie, here’s my twa pistols newly primed and loaded. Ye’ve used ane ance, dinna be sweart to use it again ! ”

“ Ane for them, and ane for me,” said Rose, quietly.

“ Ye’re a brave lass ! ” said Jock, admiringly.

“ Now, ready, and when I say the word round ye go and mak’ guid use o’ yer heels.”

At the word and of a sudden we wheeled round and fled inshore. The sailors stood still for a moment in amazement at our trick, and then broke after us in full cry.

The sand was heavy to our feet, but in the short sharp burst we had made a good fifty yards inshore before Jock cried “ Halt ! ” We wheeled round again, and formed a roughly described triangle, with Jock in the front and Rose behind. The scene that followed took place quicker than pen could trace its different phases.

One of the sailors was in advance of the rest, and close upon us. With a cat’s spring Jock leaped forward and allowed the fellow to spit himself against his sword ; in an instant Jock was back again.

Then the real fight began. The clamour of blades against blades rang out shrilly, and every muscle and nerve in one’s body grew

quicker to act at the touch of instinct tempered with judgment. I saw nothing of the fight save two cutlasses in continual nearness to my person. How I stood them off in the first fierce rush of the skirmish I never could tell ; but momentarily the attack grew calmer and keener as the men saw that it was likely to be a severe one.

I cut at one of my opponents, but he caught it in time ; ere I had disengaged my blade the other thrust at me, and I could only get back my sword soon enough to divert it from my breast, but not sufficiently to clear my body, as a stinging pain in my left arm quickly told me. I took him on the return, and he fell pinked through the chest.

“Hay’s brave lads to him !” rang out Jock’s voice, and I could tell from the tone that he was hard pressed. All the time we had been retreating, forced to give back quickly in order to prevent them getting behind our front. Being rid of one of my opponents, I thought I would give Jock a relief, and so stood my ground till he had stepped past, and then the furious attack began again, for one of the sailors

who had been fighting with Jock came to me.

Our formation was broken up now, and it was just a case of moments till they could get at our backs to complete their bloody work. I caught a glimpse of Jock for an instant, a cut across his brow rained the blood down his face, and added to the demoniacal expression of his features. Never for a moment still, with body, eye, and sword in rapid movements, he continued to keep his adversaries in check.

I was hard pressed with three men, and another wound in the shoulder had come to my lot. My sword was heavy in my hand, my eye none so true, nor my thrust so brave as at first. I thought the end had come, when Jock saw my predicament, and with a great effort won to my side. Knifie came inward to take Jock's place, though he had enough of his own on hand, and we were back to back, with Rose in the centre.

"Hurra!" cried Knifie, who was facing inland. "They're coming! This way, lads, this way!"

"Keep yer feet for another minute, Duras,

and we'll lick the devils yet !” cried Jock, catching a cut meant for me, and slashing the fellow who made it with a sweeping cut in the face.

Manners, at the first sign of rescue, threw the cloak away from him, and drawing his pistols, came towards us.

“Worry them, Rovers ! Worry them, quick !” he yelled, pointing a pistol at my head from four paces distant. I knew my hour was come, for I had seen him in practice strike a coin at twenty yards.

“Good-bye, love !” I muttered. I felt the flame of a pistol-flash hot on the side of my head from behind, and saw Manners stagger and fall to the ground.

Again had my brave lass done good service, and better work it had been (as we learnt afterwards) had Manners been without his shirt of mail, for the bullet had not pierced through to his heart, and had only stunned him for a moment by its force.

At the sight of the approaching help and at their leader's fall the men drew off from us. Manners got to his feet and urged them again

to the battle ; but they had had enough, and sullenly gave back slowly, taking their wounded with them.

I heard the rough voices of the new-comers round me, but I could not see their faces. A mist was before my eyes. I slung my hand across them to drive it away. For an instant I saw clearly, then my legs seemed to weaken until they no longer would support me, and I fell helpless as a baby to the sands.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE "MARIE" AMONG PIRATES.

WHEN I was up and about two days after (for my wounds were not dangerous) it was just in time to see the *Marie* sail into the Roads.

My heart was like to break at the sight of her, for a more pitiable wreck was never seen. Nothing but a stump represented the two brave masts that she had sailed out with, and the cleanly order of her decks was littered with the spars and rigging.

But bad as she looked, her story was worse, as her master, Seth Rilas, soon showed us, when he told his tale that evening, his head bound up round the brow with bandages.

It seems that she had sailed for about eight hours unmolested, in company with her consort the warship, when, just as morning broke, a ship was seen hanging to windward of them,

and at their stern another ship was quickly overtaking them. They set all sail in hopes of getting away from their suspicious neighbours, but, fast as the *Marie* was, the ship at her stern was faster. To make matters worse, the King's ship was as slow again as the *Marie* in point of speed, and to part company with the chance of getting out of the danger by the quickness of her heels would have been anything but a wise course of action, taking into consideration the fact that either of the two strange ships could have outsailed her.

They had not long to wait before their suspicions became a certainty.

The vessel to their windward, named the *Hawk*, opened the matter by firing a shot at the *Marie*, which by some foul chance struck her foremast and brought it down. The crew of the *Hawk* gave a cheer when they saw it topple over the side, and, held there by the rigging, bring the *Marie's* head into the wind ; and well might they cheer, for until she could get the wreckage cleared away she might as well have lain at anchor.

The King's ship, *The Murray*, got between

the *Marie* and the *Hawk* and gallantly replied to her fire, and for a time matters were on the mend.

Every exertion was made on the *Marie* to get the wreckage cleared away, but it was not an easy affair. Meanwhile the vessel at her stern, the *Rover*, was coming up under a press of sail.

The fight between *The Murray* and the *Hawk* had been going on merrily with some damage to each ship, but still with nothing to disable either of them. The *Hawk's* guns were better served, but *The Murray* had the heavier metal. At last the latter got in a shot between wind and water that seemed to give the pirates some bother, and for a moment their fire slackened a little. Again did *The Murray* get in another telling shot that brought a good part of the *Hawk's* rigging about their heads ; but that was her last service of any importance, for at that moment the *Rover* came alongside of her, and at pistol range delivered a fearful broadside that cleared her decks and tore away her helm and steering gear beyond all hope of speedy repair. Then the *Rover* turned neatly round, and bearing

down to the *Marie* gave her a broadside of the same nature as that which she had delivered at *The Murray*, but with less effect. Again did she turn and, after tacking into the wind a little, bear down upon the *Marie*, and swept alongside her.

In a moment the grappling irons held the vessels fast, and over the side of the *Rover* poured a flood of men ; short, swarthy, ill-visaged fellows, maddened with the drink in them, and careless of their lives, fighting with frenzied valour that brooks no defence.

Overpowered by the number of their assailants, and their defence gone to ruins with their masts, the crew of the *Marie* could make little stand against the boarders. One by one the little group ceased their vain endeavours until all the decks were taken, save where Simon Carter and Seth Rilas and half a dozen of the crew held the poop. They had been a larger company at first, but slowly and surely had their numbers grown smaller.

The pirates were all around them now. Simon fought bravely and dourly in the front, and alongside of him Seth Rilas wielded a good

blade. But what stand could eight men make against a numberless horde ?

Each of the group, save Simon, was surrounded ; but, expose himself as he might, no weapon was turned to his except in defence.

One by one the sailors fell, but still the rest would not yield to the proffered quarter cried to them. None but Simon and Seth of the group were standing when the rush was made. Seth was struck down with a blow from a cutlass on the head, and Silas was thrown to the deck and bound with cords.

A busy scene followed. The moneys were lifted on deck and stowed in the *Rover's* hold. Everything else on the ship that tickled any of the pirates' fancies went a like way. When all was cleared, Simon Carter was lifted up from the deck, bound as he was, and conveyed on board the *Rover*.

Ere the two ships parted company, a seaman roughly attended to Seth, and brought him to consciousness.

"When ye get into Anstruther," the man cried to Seth, "my Captain asks ye to give this letter to Mistress Rose Carter ; and see that

ye fail not, for a man's life or death hangs on it."

As soon as the *Marie* was boarded the *Hawk* had sheered off from *The Murray*, and the latter, rendered incapable of following by the loss of her helm, had been compelled to lie idle, save for a shot or two when occasion served.

She had launched two boats, well filled with men, to come to the rescue of the *Marie*, but, cumbered with wreckage as her decks were, it took some time for the boats to get under way, and before they reached the *Marie* the *Rover* had done its fell work and had sailed away.

The King's men came on board, however, and helped the sailors of the *Marie* who were not too badly wounded, or who had taken the quarter offered, to clear the ship of her wrecked tackle, and to rig up a jury mast and sail. Under this had the *Marie* come slowly into port, followed as slowly for some distance by *The Murray*, which had then made for Leith.

"And which road did the pirates tak'?" I cried, eager to be at them, and exact a terrible

revenge for their doings, an eagerness lessened none by the thought that Manners—fair-spoken Manners—was at the head of them.

"The *Hawk*, low in the water and wi' pumps going, went east, but the *Rover* gaed nor'-west," said Seth.

"And here's yer letter, Mistress Rose," he added; "and sorry I am to hae been the hand to carry it, and the tongue to tell ye the bad news."

CHAPTER XXVI.

AN HOUR OF AGONY.

SETH RILAS gave the letter to Rose, and she held it for a moment, looking at it with eyes that gazed but saw not; then she let it fall into her lap. Her dry-eyed misery frightened me. There is an end to despair when it begins with sobs, but the heart alone knows the death grip when tears come not to its relief.

Shaken down to the bottom of my soul with fear at Simon's danger, I felt my grief was but a puny thing beside this mute agony.

For sheer enduring pain never will I, nor Jock Hay, nor Seth Rilas ever know any greater than the ten minutes that followed the conclusion of Seth's longest speech.

It was all very well for me to cry, "Up and at them!" but a moment's reflection brought the enquiry, who was to be "up," and where

were they, if found, to be "at them"? Succour from the King was ever a long time in coming, if forthcoming at all. Pirates at this time, ay, and even now while I write, are accepted more as visitors of Providence, and drunk meekly and with no believing in the same cup as the Pest.

There was not a ship in our poor navy that could stand against their best, and for the ruck they were as like as two peas. Of private means to fight the pirates we had none in the way of ships. Coming to the best of it, our trade and trading boats were but poor. A crear that would cross the sea to Flanders or to France with some chance of reaching land with fair weather, and big enough to carry out her cargo of fish that had been smoked, linen and woollen cloths, skins of goats, wethers, and conies, and bring home again the salts and wines, and sometimes a cargo of the finer cloths (of the which we in Scotland have never learnt the making), was sufficient for our needs. To build better ships would have been ruinous for such a peddling trade. The *Marie* was an especially fine boat and built for carrying the

finer cargo. *She* might have been of service in our moment of need, but there she lay as helpless on the water as a barrel.

I had plenty of time to run over in my mind these and many other thoughts, for we three men could only sit and look at Rose, with never a word of comfort on our lips for her. But in our hearts a hell of hate was born. Ay, they are strong words, but true. God knows at His divine will we would have stood to our punishment as well as might be in us, and never a blacker thought than usual would have remained; but if we had to suffer we wanted it to come through less foul hands than this blow had done. If this was His will we felt that we would say with no lie in our mouths, "Thy will be done!" only after we had dealt with the instruments of this purpose. It was too foul to bear—this eating of a man's salt preceding a plundering of his goods. Therefore did hate rise in our hearts, and eyes gleamed cruel that were wont to have a glint of kindness and compassion even in their anger.

In my own breast was born for the first time that hate which knows no end save death, and

death as chance gave opportunity ; that hate which stifles ordinary warmer impulses to fairness; that hate, so deep, so justly born, but so foully contaminated with all the secret devilishness that lurks hidden in a man, which makes an excuse—a warrant for the stiletto of the assassin. Never had I felt the ripple of my everyday life stirred into turbulence as it was now. Never did I pray God for help with more malice in my heart.

Cause and effect were both lost in my desire for revenge. I forgot Simon, I forgot Rose, I only remembered Ivy Manners.

Jock Hay rose from his seat and went to the door with Seth.

“Where away, Jock ?” I cried.

“We were leaving Mistress Rose in peace to read her letter,” Jock said, loudly.

At the mention of the letter Rose glanced up and looked at us, as if to bring back into her mind all the bearing of the situation.

“There is no need to go,” she said, slowly.

And, oh ! but I was sick at the change in her voice.

“Ye have all fought for me, and right well

too; it is just ye should know all that pertains to the case. Maybe also in the telling or in the letter ye may see some gleam of hope for the safety of my father.

“He spoke not of love to me,” Rose went on in a monotone, as if it was another’s story she was relating. “He spoke not of love until the night of the *Marie’s* sailing. At my father’s request I had gone home. He came to the house and proposed that I should take a walk with him to the shore, and see the last sight of the ship. This I did, and in the quietness he began his tale of his love for me. I would have stopped him, for, though a pleasant man enough, something in me arose against him always when he tried to break away from his usual style of light talk. I would have stopped him, but he would not hear. Then I told him that I had no particle of love for him in my being. Again he strove to make me alter my refusal, and with hot words, but in vain.

“‘Think well,’ he said at last. ‘I love ye and I will have ye by fair means or foul.’

“At that I would have left him, but in a moment, at a call of his, the seamen rushed

up from their boat and laid hands on me. I broke from them, and—ye know the rest.

“As for this letter, it is well ye should know its contents, whatever they be.”

Rose opened the letter, and in the same tone of voice, and without perusing the matter to herself beforehand, read what was written within. It was from Manners :—

“ROSE,—I pleaded, but now I threaten. I warned ye; now I show my warning was not idle words, and ye have my love for ye to answer for the discourtesy.

“I would ye had come with me at the first asking, but, even yet, loveless though thou comest to me, this life were heaven compared to an existence apart from thee.

“The weapon I play with is thy love for thy father. Well I know that ye would rather bear ought than let him suffer. ’Tis humiliating for me to bring ye to my side by fear rather than love, but love will come in time.

“Need I say more, Rose? Unless ye consent to come to me and be my love—wife—thy father suffers. Suffers what? ye may ask.

“If I learnt nought else in the El Dorado, I learnt the art of torture. Not torture as ye know it in Scotland, but torture as the devils

would find it hard to equal. Love rejected in one is a very devil. Give heed then, for I speak no idle words.

“ A curious love letter this is, Rose, but still it must serve. Again I tell thee I love thee so well that nought will I allow to come between us. I will brave death and destruction rather than that.

“ Come with me, dearest, away from your surroundings that kill all that there is of joy in ye. Come with me to a fair land where happiness is not of future hope, but ever present fulfilment.

“ I have told ye of lands more fair than eye can picture, but words are useless to describe them. In them the heart knows no desire unfulfilled. All is there to make life heaven. Come with me.

“ At Killyrimie Kirk, above a mile from your house, there is a small hill. On the fifth day and on the sixth day from now do you place a lad of not more than fifteen years there—*alone*—with your reply to this letter in his hand. Say in it where and when ye will meet me. See that the lad is alone, and that no spies of yours are near, else thy father answers for it.

“ If on the sixth day no answer is ready, then woe betide ye and your father. My purpose is settled. Obey these matters to the letter and all will be well ; fail in one of the least of these and

—but I threaten no more ; deeds will answer better.

“ In your letter you must name a place where I can come to ye unarmed. I have no wish to stain our bridal bed with blood.

“ Cramped up as thou art in thy dull house, what knowest thou of happiness ? Come with me, sweet, and learn.”

When Rose finished reading the letter she let it fall again into her lap, and sat as still as before.

At length Jock Hay said :

“ Faith, but he’s a wily ane is Manners. Imagine a man in the heat of love making a’ the precautions about the messenger that’s to carry the answer. Ye might read the *precaution* bit over again, Mistress Rose.”

Rose did so, and Jock sat thinking for a little.

“ He’s clever, is Manners ; he hardly gies ane a chance, but, after a’ his care, he canna avoid ae thing.”

“ And that is ? ” I cried, starting up.

“ Sending some man or maybe mair to get the answer,” Jock replied.

I sank back in my seat again.

"I canna see how that's to help us any," I said.

"Well," replied Jock, with a grain of cheerfulness again in his voice, "it's no muckle, I'll admit, but when there's nae loaf a crust is aye welcome. And I've got haud o' a sma' plan that'll maybe come in usefu' in place o' a better."

CHAPTER XXVII.

WE PLAN REVENGE.

“LET’S hear your plan, Jock,” I said moodily.

“Oh,” cried Jock, “I’m no gaun to mak’ a formal thing o’t. I’ve just got the inklin’ o’t as yet, sae, Duras, we four will just lay oor heids thegither and see if we canna diddle this pirate body. I’m including you, Mistress Rose, for at times a woman’s heid is better than twal sturdy men’s. It’s an awfu’ pity, Duras, tho’, that ye didna drive yer bit swordie thro’ his black heart when ye had the chance.”

“What was that ?” cried Rose, sitting up.

“Did ye no hear o’t, leddy ?” said Jock. “Duras here and yer auld acquaintance, Manners, had a bit turn up wi’ the whingers a’ by themselves. Duras was in deid earnest and foucht at the peril o’ his life. Manners was earnest enouch too, but being a kind o’ pro-

vidential knave he had ta'en the precaution to wear a shirt of mail. Say what ye like, there was something chivalrous in the idea, Duras. I couldna see it myself at first, but I've gotten a glint o' his meaning noo. The fact is, he didna want his bluid to lie at yer door, Duras, kenning ye had a tender conscience.

"Weel, Mistress Rose, the fecht went this way and that way till at last Duras had him at his mercy, and a' unconscious too, wi' a rap on the heid. Duras saw the mail, and, foul though he had been dealt wi', the silly body turned awa' and let the villain tak' his chance. Man, Duras, ye should hae swallowed the honour ye're aye ravin' about, and struck for yer ain han'; should he no, Mistress Rose?"

"No," she said, and, for the first time since the news of her father's taking, her eyes sparkled, and that as she looked at me. "By my faith, no," she said again. "No blood was on Manners' hand at that time; the stain was only on his honour. Davie may have been warranted in striking, but it was like him that he did not."

"Lord, Duras," said Jock, with a half-comical

expression. "Lord, but ye've champions in high places."

At the words a flush of red overspread Rose's face ; and though her eyes glanced angrily at Jock because of the open meaning of his remarks, she held her ground steadfastly.

"He did right," she said again. "And now for this plan of yours, Jock Hay," she added, quietly but decidedly.

"Weel," said Jock, "it's plain that we maun get knowledge o' Manners' hiding-place afore we can win at him ; that is, if we're likely to be strong enough to try a tussle wi' him. Now, the only way that I see for getting that same knowledge is frae the messenger that Manners sends to tak' the letter frae the lad."

"But how ?" I cried. "Manners is nae fool. Think ye that he will send a man who'll fall into our hands like an over-ripe grozet ?"

"That's the last thing I would think o' him, Duras," replied Jock. "Oor plan is to get the man by strategy; and, that done, ye can leave it to me to mak' him speak. Ane needna gang to the El Dorado to learn the art o' torture."

“And how will ye set about getting hold of the messenger?” asked Rose.

“It’ll no be ae messenger, leddy, that Manners will send,” said Jock.

“Manners would think ane would be easy to deal wi’; twa would maybe cast oot on the road; three would dae if they were steady, but they would need somebody to watch them and keep them in order. That’s how I suspect Manners will argue to himself,” said Jock. “At least, that’s how I would reason it oot. Now, what we have to plan against is a party of at least three men and an officer. There would be nae chance o’ rushing oot on them when they cam’ near the lad; for, even if they learnt na o’ oor ambushade, the rush would likely no be successfu’. Ane or two would escape and carry the news back, and then it would be the waur for yer father. Se we can put that easy plan oot o’ oor minds.

“Before we can start wi’ ony ither we would need to get some kin’ o’ idea o’ where the *Rover* is lying. What day is it he says the lad is to be waiting at Killyrimie Kirk, Mistress Rose?”

“On the fifth and on the sixth,” replied Rose.

“He would mean the fifth or sixth frae the day ye would get the letter on,” said Jock. Then he went on, shrewdly : “That tak’s a day aff the time and leaves four days. Now say he had one day to get into his northern port (for it was nor’-west he sailed), that would leave three days for the messenger’s time to ride here, for it stands to reason that he would set them off at the very first moment. I think that’s about as near as ane could guess,” Jock added, “for if he took twa days to reach his port, the ither twa days wouldna be time enouch for his lads to reach us on the fourth. Now the question is, Is there ony likely place three days’ ride north frae here that would accommodate the boat and its knavish crew ? It would likely be a quiet kinna bay, a fair distance frae ony town, for Manners will be carefu’ o’ makin’ his presence kent for a wee while lest onything should occur to hinder his plans. Now you, Seth Rilas, should be the best hand at kenning o’ such a place.”

“How muckle wad they ride in the day, think ye ?” asked Seth.

“Sailor-men as they are,” said Jock, “I wad put it down at thirty-five miles a day, wi’ a little to spare.”

“That mak’s it over a hundred miles,” said Seth, reflectively. “About the distance o’ Aberdeen.”

“Tak’ it at that,” assented Jock. “Now, if ye were in Manners’ place, and wanted to lie quiet for a week or twa, is there ony kin’ o’ bay or river mouth that ye wad choose, in especial, for your purpose near Aberdeen?”

“Weel,” said Seth, “there’s a pretty bit o’ shelter near Stanehaven—that’s on this side o’ Aberdeen; but then that’s no a very quiet spot, wi’ the toon on ae hand and Dunottar Castle on the ither. Then a mile further up there’s Cowie, but that’s as bad. Then there’s a wee place called Portlethen on a very wild country side, but there I warrant they couldna get horses to tak’ them down here. There’s fine sheltered ports at New Aberdeen, and above the auld toon, too, but they’re ower busy for onybody wanting quiet. Then there’s Black Dog and Maltoun, but they couldna hire horses there. And then we come to the place that I would

select if I were in his shoon, and that's the mouth of the Ythan river. It's fine and sheltered ; it's quiet, and they would have only to gang a mile inshore to Newburgh to hire the horses they might want. It's the place o' places for the purpose, I think, and I might tell ye that I've heard tell o' a ship, answering to the *Rover*, lying ower part o' last winter in that same spot."

"And hoo faur will it be by road frae here ?" asked Jock.

"About a hundred and thirty miles," answered Seth.

"That's the place, I'm thinking," said Jock, decidedly, "for Manners says the fifth or sixth day, thinking maybe that the sailor-men might ride it in four days, but mair likely tak' five."

"And having settled where he's lying, Jock, what dae ye mean to do ?" I asked. "Attack him ?"

"Wi' what, lad ?" said Jock sadly. "Na, na, there will be mair whispering than singing in this ploy. We maun use oor heids as weel as oor hands. Noo the question is, whaur have we the best chance o' waylaying the mes-

sengers ? I havena been faur up into Angushire mysel', but, sae faur as I've seen, the roads were mair 'just as ye liked to ride' than tempting. Noo, there'll need to be nae bungling about oor catchin' the men, and sae it wouldna dae to reckon on their coming by a set road. Forbye that oor meeting wi' them would need to be at some distance frae here, and on the road back. They'll be aff their guard then and easier managed. There's ae thing we can reckon on—they'll have to cross the Tay at some bit or other. Now, if we could only be sure at what part, we would ken oor meeting-place."

"They might cross frae Dundee," I said.

"Off their road," replied Seth.

"Is there a regular ferry-boat at Ferry-Port-on-Craig ?" asked Jock.

"Ay," said Seth. "Plies from there to Bruchtie."

"Then that's the place," decided Jock, "and here's to oor meeting at Ferry-Port-on-Craig, for it's likely to be a hot ane."

"And who's to go with us, Jock ?" I asked.

"Never a ane but oor ain selves," cried Jock.

“ Ye see Manners may have spies in this town, and if we made a party he micht get word o’t. But we three can slip awa’ and naebody be a thoucht the wiser. After we’re gone, hooever, we’ll arrange that as mony daring chiels as we can lay oor hands on will follow us north and help wi’ force what we canna get by cunning. There’s nae use thinkin’ o’ onything else till we get haud o’ the men first. That done, we have got information, clothes, and maybe a traitor to Manners on oor side ; and the rest maun be just as chance may have it, and as the guid God decrees ! ”

CHAPTER XXVIII.

A BLINK OF SUNLIGHT.

“How many d’ye say is to be in your party, Jock Hay?” asked Rose.

“Just Duras, Seth here, myself, and I think we had best tak’ ane o’ my men.”

“Then ye can add me till it too,” said Rose, firmly.

“Havers!” cried Jock, gruffly, though I could see the maid’s spirit pleased him mightily.

“Havers yersel’, Jock Hay,” said Rose with a touch of her old manner in her voice, so quick was her heart to return to her at the first sign of action.

“It’s rank nonsense, mistress!” cried Jock, warmly.

“It’s to be, though,” said Rose.

“But listen!” cried Jock. “This is to be no maid’s work. It’s men’s. To speak plainly, it’s likely to mean stark staring murder, and

the fewer qualms of conscience on oor pairt the better."

"Ye've been a grand friend to me, Jock Hay," said Rose, laying her hand on his shoulder, "and sorry I am to say nay to any command of yours, but this has to be. Out of this affair my father must come scaithless. If your plan fails, then I maun bear the brunt. He's been a' to me for years, and I wouldna that ae hair o' his head suffered when I could save it."

"Guid life ! woman," said Jock, "d'ye ken what ye're saying ? Ye would gie yersel' up into Manners' hands !"

"Ay," said Rose, with some sadness in her voice, but with more determination.

"Surely ye're dreaming !" cried Jock. "Manners is nae gentle knight to be disarmed by yer readiness to suffer a martyrdom for yer father's sake. He'll exact his foul ransom to the utmost. Lass, I would rather strike ye through the heart wi' my dirk than gie ye into his hands."

Rose looked at me for a moment with a gaze that moved me strangely; there was sadness in

it, but more of a great compassion for me than pity for herself. I could not understand. Then she said to Jock, quietly :

“ There will aye be a dirk ready for me, Jock Hay, when dishonour fights for my poor body.”

I can no more describe the way she said the words than I could tell you of the joy that comes to a man when his maid says “ yea ” ; but I can write of the scene that followed, and the effect of her words and expression upon us.

Jock burst out into a great torrent of oaths, so deep, so foul, that had other man uttered them in the presence of Rose I would have struck him to the heart.

Seth Rilas started up from his seat, and, like a caged lion in a rage, paced the room backwards and forwards in his sailor walk of four steps one way and then back, his jaws moving in his passion until the foam stood white on his lips, but with never an articulate word from his mouth.

As for me, I had none of these means of relief. I had known Rose, and, though I dare not let the thought find expression in my brain, I had had from the beginning the knowledge

of what she would do. So I could only sit and let the iron eat into my soul. To every man there comes his hour of heavy trial : to every man his agony. As gold must be tried by fire, so must man pass through the test that forms, from the separate gathered atoms of his afore-time life, the substance of what he is to be. The flux settles from the metal, the baser ores go with the flux; the fire relaxes, the crucible is broken. The scum is on the top, the flux lies next, brilliant but brittle, and the precious metal lies with its carrier at the bottom. Thus methinks men stand their test also, and come from the trial as cowards, devils, or men. I stood my trial then and there, and though I had something of the man in me, I had a deal of the devil also—some of the flux had come down with me—for from that hour till long afterwards my justness was marred by its severeness, my just anger by its cruelty. What I admired in brave men I could not imitate for long enough afterwards. I mean, that justice tempered with mercy without which Justice is but an avenging demon. Gallant as I could be with the sword, I knew

not when to hold my hand save when it suited my ends to do so.

Careful as I had been of shedding men's blood except with the strictest honour in quarrel, I was careless now. The weapon that was turned against me was the weapon I would wield. An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, and hell's fury let loose on the villains who had placed my maid in her agony !

"So ye see I might as well go wi' ye," said Rose, when Jock's tempest had exhausted itself.

"It shall never be !" cried Jock, and Rilas echoed the "never."

Jock was proceeding to storm at the maid and argue warmly with her, when I rose up from my seat, and with a hand on his shoulder turned him toward the door.

"Let be, Jock," I said. "Let it be between Rose and me. This is my part, and I claim it. Do ye agree, Rose ?"

She sank back from me into a seat with the fear of the approaching scene in her eyes (and no wonder, as Jock Hay said afterwards to me, "for your face was set in death").

“Do ye agree, Rose?” I asked again.

“Ay,” she said, with her face hidden in her hands.

Jock yielded to my hand; but before going out he did a gallant thing, for him.

Stepping up to where my maid sat, he, big, burly, cursing Jock, sank down on one knee, and took her hand to his lips.

“God be wi’ ye in yer pain, Mistress Rose,” he said, brokenly. “I, at your knee, am at yer service till death!”

Then rising he turned to go, but stopped for a moment, and added :

“He’s a brave lad is Duras. Lippen till him.”

Then, taking Rilas with him, he went out, leaving me and my maid alone.

I walked back and forward before her, composing my thoughts to make them the more effective in combating her determination; then I began in no pleading voice, but speaking as she had spoken—as though I had put myself out of the question entirely.

“Rose, ye ken well that I respect your father mair than any man on earth, that I owe him

all. Ye ken well, also, that I love ye better than my life."

She nodded her head in assent.

Then of a sudden, when I meant to be most tender of her, the devil assailed me with the thought that her determination to go to Manners in return for her father's liberty was no hardship for her—since she loved Manners. I struggled against it for a while, but I allowed the dark thoughts to grow, and I broke out sullenly :

"Ye're ower ready to be your father's ransom for my taste."

She looked up wonderingly, and then asked :

"For why ?"

"Maybe to be in Manners' arms is no sae distasteful to ye as some would think."

At that she sprang up and faced me with glaring eyes.

"Davie ! d'ye ken what ye're sayin' ?"

"Fine !" I said.

She raised her hand as though she would have struck me.

"How dare ye say so ? oh, how dare ye ?" she cried, her eyes looking into mine so that

I could read her horror at the thought. Then her straight-held figure relaxed its stiffness, and she flung herself into her chair, sobbing bitterly.

My heart was moved so that the evil thoughts fled, and I knelt at her side.

“Forgive me, Rose, forgive me !” I cried to her.

Her sobs raised a grip in my throat that almost strangled me. She would not answer nor lift her head; but a hand, wet with tears, moved from her face and wavered in the air for a moment, then, as a dove comes to rest, settled into my two outstretched palms.

Even in my bitterness and despair, at that moment I felt we were nearer to each other than ever we had been before. Something in the softness and lie of the hand, something in its touch, tempted me to hope. In a moment much of her conduct flew before my mind, in a moment much of my denseness flew from me, and I trembled.

By-and-by she raised her head and sat up in her chair. Her hand began to be withdrawn, but I held it captured. She looked at me with

a weak, pitiful smile through her tears; and in that face I saw the Rose I had dreamed of for so long—the heart of my heart and my love.

“It’s too late now, Davie,” she said, in answer to me; though I had said nothing save the look that was in my eyes. “We maun twine.”

“Rose !” I cried.

“Ay, Davie, I loved ye fine !”

“Rose !” I cried again, and would have raised the hand I held to my lips; but she would not have it.

“It’s too late now, Davie, when we maun twine sae soon.”

“And ye love me, Rose ?” I asked.

“That I do, Davie,” she said. “Richt weel, too.”

“And yet ye would go to Manners !” I cried.

“Ay, but for my father’s sake !” she replied.

“Yet ye would go into Manners’ arms loving me as ye say ? I canna believe it !” I cried.

“I said I would go to Manners,” she said, quietly; “but there’s a dirk between me and his arms. Ye say I canna love ye weel, Davie,” she cried, standing up before me straight, a

bonny maid. “D’ye ken the auld sang, Davie ! that the auld folk sing hereabouts of Maid Marion ?—

“ ‘And if we twa ne’er wedded be
Nae ither man shall ever bide wi’ me.’

Ay, Davie, and I’m the Maid Marion.”

“Oh, Rose !” I cried, beside myself. “Gie me ae chance to succour yer father, and do ye bide here. Let my love cry for me. It’s been lang in the coming, and, oh ! but it’s sweet in its tide. It’ll be mair torture for yer faither to live and ken ye’re wi’ Manners, than ony device the blackheart could use on him. Gie me ae chance to win him clear, and I swear that gin he fa’s I fa’ alangside him; if my life can clear him, then a deid man am I. Lippen till me, Rose, and God in heaven curse me for ever if I be not a true man till ye. Twa deid men are better than a dishonoured woman. Say yes, Rose !”

“Ye tempt me sairly, Davie !” she cried.
“But then his life if ye fail.”

“He’ll die a man and not a madman,” I replied. “Think ye he would live in peace if

ye were in the *Rover* ? Gie me the chance, Rose ! ”

“ God help me ! ” she cried. “ My love for ye is in the balance with the love I have for my father, and I canna decide.”

“ Say yes, Rose ? ”

Rose pondered long, with many a look at me; then she came straight forward and put her arm round my neck (ready was I to bend to her), and kissed me full on the lips.

I raised her hand to kiss it, but with a smile she looked up at me and said :

“ My lips are yours, Davie, from now, henceforth, and for ever.”

And think not that I was backward in availing myself of my privilege.

CHAPTER XXIX.

WE SET OUT ON THE RAID.

WE rode out of Anstruther next night after the gloaming had fallen—Jock Hay, Seth Rilas, Gallows Dick (one of Jock's men), and myself ; but ere I ask you to ride with us I might as well gather up the thread of the web-making of the day.

I cannot write of what was betwixt Rose and me, I would not if I could. A mummer in a pulpit were less desecration of a holy place than the telling of the inmost thoughts of my maid.

Oh, the magic of love that makes two hearts sib to each other ! Who shall sing of it ? Not he to whom it has come, for, as money cannot buy it, neither can he have it who would traffic in it, nor are there words to tell of it.

Now, if I had told my tale aright—if my

maid is as was once your maid—then you who read, if ye have drunk of the potion, can lay down this book and read the page in your hearts of May-day—of the springing of the flowers, the singing of the birds, of the blood that makes life spring in you, and of the love that made it May-day. Never a one grew so old who could not at his will read that sacred page.

If you be young and have no thought of love yet, save sometimes in the spring when a listlessness and longing come and drive out thoughts of sport, then you cannot be with me in my joy; but you can take it from an old man who has seen life that the best prayer a young man can pray is for a clean heart and a pure spirit, so that when the soul of his maid uncloses he may enter into it clean and unstained.

My love had come to me in my hour of agony and hers also, and that made it none the less keen. There's no sauce like hunger for a good meal; and what added a relish to ours was the fact that our courtship might be short. To some this would have meant tears,

but we had come together with the full knowledge of it and were not to be scared, and, as I have said, it put a fine edge on our appetites.

No dawdlin', frequent among lovers, was ours. No spinning of the sweetness into fine threads so that each thread might glorify its especial day. We had no time nor liking for the pleasure.

Only once my maid faced the days to come, saying :

" Oh, Davie, Davie ! what if this should be our last meeting ? "

" Never think of it, lass," I said, heartily.

" But what if it should be ? " she whispered, bending her head on my breast and clinging to me. (What a man I felt myself to be !)

" Oh, Rose ! " I cried, " wi' the love so sweet that is mine, and in me, I could win through the dark pit itsel'."

" But it is possible," she said, with a sob.

" Possible, probable, ca' it what ye will," I cried from my heart. " I'm so selfish, I grudge a moment of this time spent on the time to come. What if I die, Rose ? I couldna ask a better cause. If God in His power sees fit

to tak' me, is it for me to grudge Him my life when He has given me an hour of your love? His power is great, lass, but as Maister James Melville says, His mercy is greater, and doubtna that He'll bring us together again, else why should He have bound our twa hearts sae close? I tell ye, Rose, I'm sae full of the knowledge that I have your love that I'm content. It's mair than I could hope for, it's as much as I had in my power to wish for. It's like a springtide—nae other could reach higher—so I'm content. Let's mak' the maist o' the hour, sweetheart, for how dae I ken that ye'll be the same again, my changefu' maid? Let's mak' the maist o' the hour, Rose, and leave the morrow to God and the strength o' my arm."

She took my advice, seeing I was so keen on it, and our love and not our fears held sway.

The next day had a doleful face on it. From the crowd that clustered about the house and the *Marie* the night before, cursing and swearing great oaths of vengeance on the bloody pirates, we had had great hopes of forming a company that would follow us to the North after

the men from Manners had gone clear away; but we had let our moment of luck slip from us unused. The brave crowd had had time to sleep on it, and when they awakened, both the fear for their skins and the scoldings of their helpmates had cooled their ardour—more than cooled it—had fairly drowned it. So when we went round them in the morning we had commiseration enough and to spare, but no offer of blades and of men to wield them, no offer to follow us on our desperate mission. We urged, and were first met with excuses. We better urged, and for our pains and explanations were called madmen to go by land to attack a shipful of pirates—madmen, indeed, to think of attacking them at all, so great a terror did these scourges have for townsmen and others. So lest our plan might get wind by much talking we were forced to desist.

Half a dozen good men and true came to us with the offer of their swords, but they were at once too small a party and too great for our needs too. Too small to follow up our efforts with enough force to make force successful; too great to enable them to march with us

without suspicion being raised. However, we enlisted them, in order that Rose might have a guard while we were away, in case that further efforts like the first of Manners' might be tried.

Jock sent one man to Edinburgh to raise the cry there, but as it turned out—and as we heard afterwards, for we had not time to wait his return—with as little success. In one body the traders who had lost their moneys refused help, declaring in a letter—which I got hold of and preserved to their loss—that they were not inclined to send good money after bad, and that if we were foolish enough to try our chances against so strong a force, what were left of us, if any, and in the remote chances of our expedition being successful, could have their share of the cargo for their pains. Doubtless they sniggered cynically while they wrote these lines, but he always laughs the heartiest who laughs last. However, we knew nothing of that matter when we rode out from Anstruther that night, but were big with the hope that soon behind our backs a great party would be coming to bring to

fruition any advantage we might have gained before their arrival.

We got to Ferry-Port-on-Craig with no adventure on the way, save that, taking to the hillside, in order to avoid the marshy ground, we saw riding towards us four men. They kept to the Lowlands and were riding hard, so that, though we were none so well hidden, they saw us not. We had a good sight of them, however, and Seth recognized two as men of the crew of the *Rover*, so that we had no doubt as to their being the party, and many congratulations Jock Hay got from us for his correct reading of Manners' probable thoughts.

We were just riding on again when all at once Gallows Dick let out a great oath, and, with a slap on his thigh, exclaimed:

"I've got him noo !"

"Got what, ye daft gowk ?" cried Jock.

"Did ye notice the man in charge of the party, Captain ?" said Gallows Dick.

"I didna pay particular heed to him," answered Jock.

"Then ye didna recognize him ?" asked Gallows Dick, anxiously.

“No, man, I didna,” said Jock. “But, noo ye speak o’ it, his face was kinna like somebody’s, though I couldna tell ye wha’s.”

“What sae ye to ‘The Daredevil’?” asked Gallows Dick, riding up knee for knee with Jock, and peering into his face.

“Dod, man, ye’re richt!” cried Jock. “Daredevil it was, and your auld comrade too.”

“Who’s Daredevil, Jock?” I asked.

“The stoutest and maist loyal sodger ever I kent,” said Jock, warmly, “and that’s no excepting mysel’. He was wi’ Gallows Dick and a wheen mair o’ us in the Low Countries for a year or twa, but that’s five years ago. A grand hand, Daredevil,” muttered Jock, as the memory doubtless of the lawless times sprang up in his mind.

“A great hand, Daredevil,” he said again, but to me this time. “And a loyal ane to boot. He was a man like this. Let him tak’ service under anybody, and for as long as the conditions were kept up by the ither side, Daredevil would have ridden through fire alongside them, and never a cheep frae him. Folk wha kent him best, liked him best, and them wha used him

to the letter o' agreement got guid service oot o' him. Some folk made the mistake o' playing fast and loose wi' him, and kent o' their mistake to their cost—for, at the least sign o' treachery or double-dealing wi' the affairs he had in hand, Daredevil was on the scent o't, and keen as a hound too. Syne if the double-dealing proved to be true, Daredevil was theirs nae longer. An auld saying o' his was, 'Fair to the face, and fair to the back, am I to my employers, but I expect the same frae them; and, by heaven, I'll hae it, or ken the reason why.'

"A grand hand, Daredevil, tak' him a' thro'," added Jock. "Nae twists in him but that, and that couldna be ca'd a twist, for it's mair an extra straightness."

"D'ye see ony way o' makin' him o' service till us?" I said, as we drew up at the ferryboat and dismounted.

Jock gave a shake o' his head.

"I'll think o't, Duras; but I'm feart no, unless Manners has been trying some o' his tricks on him, and we can prove it clearly to him."

CHAPTER XXX.

MURDER AT THE FORD.

WE stayed at the ferry-hut for two days arranging our disguises anew, and preparing as much as possible for an encounter with the men. The ferryman was an old man by the name of Angus, an eerie kind of man altogether. His weird face comes back to me at times yet, and I can call up in my memory his exact figure, though that was the only time I ever came in contact with him. The face, coupled to a misshapen figure, gave us anything but a good impression of him, and without his aid, or at least his connivance, the plan we had thought on could hardly be a success; so that, for a while, we thought on trying some other.

Jock, however, had a long talk with the man, and he turned out to be not such a bad body at all, so we sat down in some comfort until the seamen would return.

The plan that we had settled on was a simple one, but none the worse of that.

One of us was to be constantly on the watch on a bit of uprising ground that gave a good view of the road from Anstruther, so that at the first sign of the seamen's return we might be warned. At his cry, attired as grooms, we were to be getting our horses on the ferryboat, just as the seamen came up. Being in such a hurry, as they doubtless would be, and seeing us meagrely clothed and unarmed, they would be for using the ferry before us. Now, our plan was to let them have their will of it at first, until they had got off their beasts; then, grumbling and cursing at our hard luck, we would mix among them till each man of us was aside his enemy.

Then Jock was to let drive at Daredevil, his old comrade, with one of the stretchers of the boat, hard enough to stun him only. At that sign we were to draw the only weapons that would be on us—namely, dirks, and—— Well, we did not care to say what was to happen then, and, besides, it was not needed. Each man of us knew it was to be no maid's work,

but though we spoke not of what was actually to be done after we drew our dirks, our plan rested on the fact that not one of the four seamen, save Daredevil, would ever need his horse again.

Just as gloaming was settling down into night on the second day at Ferry-Port-on-Craig, Gallows Dick, who was on the watch, rode up hot with the news that they were coming at a good round pace.

Angus, the ferryman, got ready his boat, and we our horses.

We were driving the first beast aboard when our gentry rode up. At first they were coming with us, and were civil enough, but when they saw that the size of the boat forbade, nothing would do for them but that we would render up our right to the first crossing. For a moment or two they were daunted at our clangour, but when they saw our mean dress and want of arms, they were quick to push in among us, laying their whips upon our shoulders. When we would have answered them back in their own coin their whips were dropped, and their hands went to their swords. Cowed, we shrunk

at the sign, and yielded way sullenly to them. With a scornful smile at our pusillanimity, they withdrew their hands from their hilts and dismounted.

“Here, knave, drive my horse aboard,” cried one of the seamen, flinging the reins to me.

I caught them in silence.

The other seamen were quick to follow their comrade's lead, and, as contemptuously, flung their reins to the others of our party, staying, however, by their horses' heads the while.

Jock had put himself in the way of Daredevil, and it was his horse he held.

“Tak' him on !” cried Daredevil to Jock.

“It's an ill thing that we hae baith to gie up——” began Jock, in a thick voice, when Daredevil came up to him.

“Drive him on !” he cried, fiercely.

Jock obeyed so sullenly that Daredevil followed him till his horse was fairly aboard.

“It's an ill thing——” began Jock again.

“Tether him !” cried Daredevil, standing up to him bullyingly.

Jock bent down to the bottom of the boat as if to find the rope; then, next moment, he had

raised himself to his full height, and, ere ever Daredevil could draw, a boat stretcher whistled in the air and came full down on the latter's head. He sunk to the bottom of the boat without a moan.

It was foul work this striking of men from behind—once, twice, and thrice—seeing them go down like stricken swine, and feeling the filthy grip of the dirk handle loathsome in one's fingers. The smell of blood stank in our nostrils.

Angus ran shrieking into the ferry-hut.

In the mirk we knelt each by his man and made siccar; and then rose with our eyes to ground, caring not to look his neighbour in the face.

More was to be done yet, and we did it quickly, stripping each dead man of his clothes and consigning him to the water with the splash of the body for his sole requiem. Then we got into the boat, driving our quivering horses before us, with never a word spoken. We washed our hands, but all the waters of the Tay were not sufficient to rid us of the feel, and every other moment I fancied that my

fingers were again sticking together with the drying blood.

Jock cried to Angus to come out, but for a while in vain. At last he came forth, and laid our swords in the boat.

“Row on yersel’s !” he cried. “Ye hae left me ill enough dreams. Row on yersel’s, and leave the boat at the ither side; I want to see yer faces nae mair.”

We got out the oars and set to, glad of some motion to help us to get rid of the thought. In the middle of our passage a groan came from the bottom of the boat where Daredevil lay.

“Dod, we had forgotten him !” cried Jock, with an attempt at a laugh that grated sadly on our nerves.

Some water was poured over the stunned man’s head, and by-and-by he recovered and sat up, looking wonderingly about him.

“Where am I ?” he asked.

“On earth,” cried Jock, “when it was mair fit that ye should be wi’ yer comrades in hell.”

Daredevil sprang to his feet and felt for his sword, but we had removed it.

“Nane o’ that, Daredevil !” cried Jock. “Lie ye quiet, man, or it’ll be the waur for ye.”

“Ye know me !” exclaimed Daredevil.

“Ay,” answered Jock sadly.

Daredevil peered through the mirk at Jock, but what with the darkness and Jock’s disguise could make nothing of his features.

“Who are ye ?” at length he asked.

“Jock Hay.”

“Jock Hay !” cried Daredevil, in surprise. “Jock Hay, my auld comrade,” he added, with a touch of joy in his voice. “Man, Jock, but I’ve longed to meet ye again,” he said, cordially, putting out his hand to Jock.

Jock left it untouched.

Daredevil drew it back slowly.

“Things maun be sadly changed, Jock Hay, if ye refuse my hand,” he said. “I ken fine I’m yer prisoner—the worsted in the fight—and am at your mercy. But, man, never gie a thought to that, or how ill ye may have to deal wi’ me. Daredevil was never ane to wear his sword in war, and cry a ‘parley’ when his throat was in danger. Never gie that a thought, Jock. Let what’s to come, come, but let twa

old comrades embrace for the joy of their meeting."

Again he put out his hand, but none was stretched out to his.

"It's no that," said Jock, slowly.

"What is't then?" said Daredevil, proudly.

"I'm loth to tell ye to yer face for the sake o' auld times," said Jock. "There's Gallows Dick, anither o' oor clan, maybe he'll tell ye."

"By my troth, a good meeting," cried Daredevil, turning to Gallows Dick fondly, and flinging his arm round his neck.

"Hands off!" exclaimed Gallows Dick, roughly, rising to his feet and freeing himself none too tenderly of Daredevil's arm.

"Ye also?" cried Daredevil, with the pain of the insult deep in his voice.

He sank his head in his arms for a while, pondering bitterly, and then raised it again to speak.

"'Twas none too good a trade I've been in lately, but a man must live, and there was no other at the time. But neither fighting Jock Hay nor Gallows Dick were ever so gentle-

mind as to look down on a trade where money was got at the risk of life."

"It's no that," said Gallows Dick, well primed by us as to his conduct to his comrade.

"Then in God's name," cried Daredevil, "tell me what it is that makes two old comrades shrink at my touch. We have been where fair blows and foul blows were hot, and we stood by our patron and together as comrades, each true to his service. The service I'm in is na worse than some we fought together for. Tell me, then, wherein I have sinned so deeply that ye would refuse to take my hand."

"Daredevil," began Gallows Dick, gruffly, "we've been freelances at times, and have ta'en by micht what wasna oors by reason. I blame na ye for that, for the morn I micht return it to mysel'. But in oor comradeship that ye speak o', what think ye would have been the name gi'en to a man wha traded in women's honour? wha set a price on the purity of ane of his mother's kind? Tell me the name ye would have gi'en him, Daredevil?"

“Ye know well yourself, Gallows Dick,” said Daredevil, between his teeth, “that had he been of us a rope and the first tree would have been his fate, and no name foul enough for his corpse.”

“And yet, kenning that,” cried Gallows Dick, harshly, “kenning that, ye—ye would offer yer hand to us ?”

Daredevil stared vacantly at the man.

“What has that to do with me ?” he exclaimed.

“Ah !” cried Gallows Dick, “everything in the world, for it’s the service ye’re riding on, ye pimp that ye are !”

“Ye lie in your throat !” cried Daredevil, springing towards him, and almost upsetting the boat.

Jock laid his heavy hand upon Daredevil and drew him back to his seat.

“Quiet !” he commanded. “And less free in your language, too, or oor patience and yer life will come to a speedy end. Ye say that Gallows Dick lies, but we ken better ; and, Daredevil, I would rather have seen ye dead than riding on such an errand.”

"I tell ye, ye lie !" cried Daredevil again.

"It's easy proved," cried Jock. "What errand do ye say ye were on ?"

"In the matter of arranging for a ransom," said Daredevil, sullenly.

"By word of mouth ?" asked Jock.

"By letter," answered Daredevil.

"Ye'll have the answer on ye then ?" said Jock.

"I have," answered Daredevil.

"Open and read it, then," said Jock.

"That's against my orders," replied Daredevil.

"That's very likely," said Jock, with a sneer, "and a bonny way to get oot o' yer trouble. Either ye're a fool or a knave, or ye would ken the errand Manners sent ye on. Ay," he added, as Daredevil started up at the name, "ye see we ken a' about yer precious Captain; and, on my word of honour, Daredevil, comrade o' the auld time, if that letter doesna prove what we hae ca'd ye, we'll let ye and it gae in peace."

"Ye know all ?" asked Daredevil, after a moment's pause.

"Ay, all," said Jock, emphatically. "And

for the auld time I wish I could think ye didna ken what I ken to be inside that letter."

"And what's that ?" said Daredevil, fiercely.

"The selling of a woman's honour," answered Jock, firmly.

"On your word of honour, Jock Hay ?"

"On my word of honour I say it is so," answered Jock.

"Then I believe ye in so far that I'll break trust with my patron and open the letter, and if he has deceived me he shall rue bitterly the day he gave me his foul work to do."

He tore open the letter, and while Jock got a light I could hear Daredevil vowing deep vengeance on Manners if the letter proved Jock's statement.

The tinder kindled, and by its glow Daredevil read these words written by Rose :

"If only the possession of my body will content ye, then the bargain is made—my honour for my father's life."

He spoke no word, but sat with his face and body motionless.

Jock laid his hand on his shoulder.

“Ye kent na what was in it ?” he asked, and this time kindly.

Daredevil shook off his deeper thoughts and rose to his feet, looking Jock straight between the eyes.

“By the soul of my mother, I did not.”

“I kent it !” cried Jock, with the great hearty ring back in his voice again, and, falling to, he and Gallows Dick made much of their old comrade.

After a while, when the first joy o’ their meeting had subsided,—and no slight thing it was to these men to meet after years of separation—men who had proved their friendship by the sacrifice of their blood at sundry times for the others’ safety,—when this joy had subsided, Jock cried:

“And we’re auld comrades once more ?”

“Ay, but not for long,” said Daredevil, his face growing set again.

“How ?” cried Jock. “Maun we part soon ?”

“Ay,” Daredevil answered. “I’ve got a vow on my soul. I’ve to seek out this hound Manners, and teach him the last lesson he’ll

have in this life. I must leave ye on account of that."

"There's nae necessity," said Jock.

"How?" asked Daredevil, quickly.

"We're gaun on the same mission," answered Jock, with a laugh.

CHAPTER XXXI.

DAREDEVIL JOINS OUR ENTERPRISE.

AGAIN we found that Jock had reasoned out correctly the thoughts of Manners, for Daredevil gave us the information that the *Rover* was lying in the mouth of the Ythan river, more than two days' ride from Broughty Ferry. What with the meeting of his comrades, the disgust at the crew of the *Rover* that had always been in him since he had joined the boat, and the treachery of Manners, it did not require very much coaxing to get Daredevil to take our side.

"It's a wee like treachery on my part," he muttered; but Jock would not listen to him, laughing at the idea that the besting of such a crew by whatever means would be called by such a dignified name.

"Treachery, indeed !" he roared, in his great voice. "By my feth, but it's not ! It's God's

punishment on a heartless set of villains, that's what it is. Ye were never meant for a pirate, Daredevil, else ye widna be sae nice in yer language. Treachery ! my heart, if this is treachery, what name would ye give to Manners, wha ate o' Simon Carter's bread and drank o' his wine, then turned on him like a fox in a fowlyard ? ”

Jock and Gallows Dick kept up such a terrible “on-ding” of like talk on the subject, that at last the poor man—was it but for the sake of peace ?—consented to help us in our desperate undertaking.

It went sad against the grain at first, I could see, for in some of his principles Daredevil, so far as they carried him, was the soul of honour. What did in a great measure tend to make him take our side was the sheer wildness of the scheme—four men marching against forty—for, as Jock told me, the thing that Daredevil loved was the making of the impossible possible.

At any rate, let his private impulses and thoughts be as they might be, we had got him on to our side by the middle of the next day,

and, once joined, we found in him no half-hearted comrade.

We plied him with many questions, and got curious answers to some of them. To one of these especially we received the information that most of the crew were living, not on board the boat, but on the shore.

"Ye'll mean just during the day," cried Jock.

"No," said Daredevil with a grin. "Both night and day."

"Dod, but that's curious," said Jock; "what brings that about?"

"Well, ye see," said Daredevil, "the men are a set of cowards when the drink's out of them—cowards to the steel, but rank cowards to the Pest."

"Hae ye got the Pest on board the *Rover*?" I cried.

"So I was given to believe," answered Daredevil, with the same cunning smile twitching his lips.

"Wha's got it?" cried Jock.

"Simon Carter," he answered.

"That's the end of all," I said, letting my

bridle slip from my fingers. "It was bad that he should be in bondage, but this mak's the bad waur."

It seemed like an end to all our planning, for whatever little chance we had of getting him clear, sound and hale, able to help himself, it was certain that that little would be reduced to nothing if we had to reckon on carrying away a sick and helpless man.

"Haud on a wee, Duras," said Jock, "ye dinna ken Daredevil as weel as me; he's a jokin' kind o' body in his ain grim way, and frae the manner he tells this story I would suspect there's something ahint it a'."

"I would suspect that myself," answered Daredevil to Jock.

"Dinna be sae sparín' o' yer speech, man," cried Jock, anxiously. "Tell us hoo it a' happened, and what ye suspect to be wrang. Set to, man, and gie us a fair screed o' it a'."

"Well, it was like this," answered Daredevil, settling down to his yarn. "Once we had got free of the *Marie* and got hold of her gold, the crew turned to Manners and asked him what he meant to do with Simon Carter, meaning

that if he was not worth his keep they would be pleased to settle up with him themselves. And ye know what that meant.

“Manners lent a deaf ear to them for a while, till they started to lay hands on Simon, and then he turned on them. ‘Ye fools,’ he cried, ‘that man’s ransom is worth nearly as much as we’ve got in the hold already!’

“Though each man’s share of the plunder was more than he had ever looked for at the trade, they were still greedy for more; and though some of the crew were keen to be on shore again in some safe port where they might have leisure to spend their ill-gotten gains, the majority sided with Manners, and lauded him loudly for his shrewdness. So a return to Scotland was settled on.

“As soon as we got anchored most of the men were eager for a settlement of the plunder that they might go ashore and enjoy themselves, but Manners put his foot down on that.

“‘Not a penny will ye get till we have settled about Carter’s ransom, got the money, and won clear of Scotland.’

“He was frightened, ye see,” added Dare-

devil in explanation, "that the men would run wild over the countryside and bring down on them and the *Rover* the King's justice, or the vengeance of the traders.

"Now, on board the *Rover* there were forty-two men forby the Captain. Thirty of these were blackguards ill to match—men who, maddened with their continual drunkenness, had no more control over themselves than a bairn.

"When they learnt that they would have to wait for the better part of twelve days before the ransom could be arranged and they could get leave to satisfy their ill appetites, they were keen on taking the shortest way out of it—killing Simon Carter.

"But the other ten men (I'm not counting myself) were men who were in the business to make the most money out of it at the least expense of their skins. They saw no reason for endangering their lives by letting the whereabouts of the *Rover* be known, as would have been the result had the men got their shares and had gone like demons to the countryside. Likewise they saw less reason for killing the goose that, kept alive, could give them golden

eggs, so they stood by the Captain. There was the likelihood of a very pretty shindy between the two parties had not Manners stood up and in his softest voice proposed that the matter should be left over till next morning. As it was then late at night, there was no opposition to this. Some pretty plotting went on that night to which I was no party, but the outcome of it was that next morning the news was given out that Simon Carter had taken the Pest.

“Ye can mak’ what ye like of that,” said Daredevil with a grin. “As for me, I put no trust in it at all. It was well-arranged though, for no sooner was the news well spread over the boat and the men getting together in groups, pale of the face, to discuss them, than who should come running up the ladder than Simon himself, the very spit of death. His face was blue, his een staring out of his head, and his cries for ‘Water ! water !’ more pitiful than anything I have ever heard.

“Ye never saw such a skeered pack of cowards in all yer life. Men, who the night before were keen on killing him, now that they

had his chance, ran from him like weans from a madman. Not one of them would go within a yard of Simon, and that only when they were jouking past him. The cry was all to get off the boat now, away from the Pest on to the shore. Some cried out, 'Kill him first, and then leave the *Rover* for a week till it gets rid of the smit !'

"It was easy crying, but who was to do it ? That was what they could not find. Their sole desire now was to get clear of the ship, and they were determined upon leaving her for a while.

"Some of them dared the Pest in so far as to try and get at the treasure, but the ten men who stood by the Captain held them off.

" 'None of that !' cried Manners. 'Share and share alike is the rule, and ye must wait till it's counted up and yer shares reckoned.'

"But they were in no mood to wait, and willingly agreed to his next proposal that seals should be put upon it, and that a watch should be arranged for the care of it and the *Rover*.

" 'Come now,' cried Manners, 'who'll volunteer to stay by me ?'

“ One by one the ten men stepped up and agreed to keep a regular watch.

“ ‘ Then ye can go ashore now,’ cried Manners to the others, ‘ till we get the boat free from the Pest, and the less communication ye have with the ship the better.’

“ To this the cowards agreed, and the long-boat took a load of them ashore and then returned to the ship for the rest.

“ Manners looked at me, and seeing I was not going, came up and said :

“ ‘ Are ye not for the shore ? ’

“ ‘ No,’ I said, looking him in the eyes; ‘ I’m not afraid of the Pest.’

“ He looked at me again.

“ ‘ Ye’ll be ane of them who would rather have the man’s life and away, than wait a bit and have his ransom ? ’ he asked.

“ ‘ Indeed I’m not ! ’ I cried. ‘ I’m for the money, no matter how long we wait.’

“ ‘ And ye do not fear the Pest ? ’

“ ‘ No *this* Pest,’ I answered.

“ ‘ Ye’re keen of the sight,’ he said, sourly.

“ ‘ I learnt it in my youth.’

“ ‘ Then see that ye be not too keen ! ’ he

cried, giving me a dark look out of his eyes.

“ ‘They see best who speak the least,’ I said, with a laugh.

“ From that moment all that day he had a civil word to me, and at e’en he had me down to his cabin, and with many compliments put me in charge of the party and the letter containing, as he said, the conditions of the ransom.”

“ So ye think that Simon is in the plot, and just making believe ? ” I asked.

“ I wish I may never be worse in health than he ! ” Daredevil cried.

“ And there’s only ten men and the Captain on board the ship ? ” asked Jock.

“ Ye’re wrong, Jock,” said Daredevil, “ for the three men ye—ye know of were taken from the ten, and that leaves only seven.”

“ And the rest of the crew ? ” Jock asked. “ Where are they ? ”

“ Some are lodging in change houses in Newburgh, others were forcing themselves into farm-houses round about, but the main lot are camping on the shore about half a mile to the west of where the *Rover* is lying.”

“Then, Duras, we’ve a chance yet!” cried Jock, cheerily.

“A better chance than what we thought when we started, Jock,” I said, “but a fell bad ane yet.”

“Where were ye to meet Manners to gie him his answer?” I asked of Daredevil. “On the ship?”

Daredevil brought his hand down on his thigh with a bang.

“By the cross, but Fate is playing into my hands!” he cried. “Manners’ cunning is proving his own destruction. The wily devil, I see now, was afraid of the answer being seen by other eyes than his if I brought it aboard, so he arranged that I should meet him at dusk on the headland at the mouth of the bay before going on to the *Rover*. It’s there I’ll teach him his lesson!” cried Daredevil, with an evil laugh.

“Ye maun leave that to me,” I said, quietly. “I have more wrongs than ye to avenge.”

“Never!” cried Daredevil; “it’s my hand will strike him.”

“Not so,” I said; “I claim my right.”

Daredevil cried out at that, but Jock interrupted him.

“Duras is right, Daredevil,” he said. “Ye see, he’s gey chief with the maid wha writes the letter.”

“Chiefer than ye ken, Jock !” I cried.

“But no chiefer than I thoucht,” said Jock, with a laugh. “So ye see,” he said, turning again to Daredevil, “he has the best richt to the killing; for while ye have but yer ain quarrel to avenge, he has a maid’s, and women should aye be first, lad.”

CHAPTER XXXII.

AT PINCH OF DEATH.

DUSK fell when we were within three miles of our destination—within three miles of the mouth of the Ythan river—within three miles of my revenge. At Drums we cast off the filthy rags of grooms' clothes that we had been masquerading in, and put on the cleaner if less respectable suits of the dead sailor-men. Gallows Dick was to ride wide of us, as there was no suit for him, and as we could not take him along with us if we meant to follow out the plan that had been arranged.

“They're in need o' patching, these claites,” said Jock.

“We did the job as neat as we could,” growled Seth Rilas. “But if the dirks are to reach the man, ane canna be very particular about his duds.”

There was no moon when we rode out again, neither was there to be any that night.

Outlined against the sheeny sky we saw Manners pacing to and fro on the Head. At the jingle of our horses' harness he stopped his walk and stood on the alert.

I thought that Daredevil was to be trusted, but nevertheless I rode by his left hand with ready dirk.

Manners whistled softly a signal. Daredevil answered him with the reply.

We rode steadily up the rise with never a word until within a hundred yards of him.

"Halt !" he cried, suddenly.

We drew up our horses as quickly as he had cried, keen to get as near as possible ere we were discovered.

"Who's there ?" Manners asked; for, though we could see his figure against the starry sky, he could discern nothing of us, still situated as we were in the hollow.

"It's me — Daredevil," was the answer promptly given.

Manners gave a sigh of relief, and we saw, or at least imagined we saw, his figure relax from its alert attitude.

“Have ye got the answer?” he cried, coming towards us.

We put our horses again in motion, and went to meet him.

Daredevil without a word handed him Rose’s letter, and at the same time we dismounted, and got our horses between Manners and ourselves.

Manners fingered the letter in his agitation, and we were in terror lest he should discover the fact that it had been opened and but clumsily mended.

He tore open the covering, and, going aside from us a step or two, attempted to read the writing by the pale light of the stars.

“Light a bit of tinder, man!” he cried, at length, to Daredevil.

“My flint’s broken,” said Daredevil. “Here you,” he cried to me. “Snap yer lock and light some tinder. Hold it up near the Captain for him to read by.”

I stepped forward to Manners’ side with one of the dead sailors’ huge pistols in my hand; not for use—neither for a glow nor a shot. Not thus was Manners to die. His life was

not worth the chance of our discovery at the noise of a pistol.

I stood still for a moment. He turned to me with an oath at my tardiness. Our faces were within a couple of feet of each other, and we could each see the other's features plainly.

Our eyes met. The oath died away on his lips when he saw who was by his side—when he read that which was in my eyes. I let the pistol drop to the ground. Paralysed, as a jay is by the serpent's eyes, Manners stood motionless, his jaw drooping, the whites of his eyes prominent by reason of his terror.

I caught him by the throat. A deep, abiding hatred was in the grasp; all the slow-gathering wrath of many days past steeled my muscles. When a man "gangs wud" four men are ill put to it to hold him in check. I put forth all my strength—the strength of madness, if you will; it served my need.

He made a feeble effort to reach the dirk in his girdle, but I was before him with my left hand, and sent the blade glimmering over the cliff into the sea.

Again his hand went to his girdle, and he

pulled out the pistol. I caught his wrist in my hand, and with a wrench broke it like a rotten branch, and with a sound as like.

He tried to wrestle, to reach my throat, and made sundry other attempts to free himself. In vain ! He was as a child in my grasp, or, rather, my hatred had given me the strength of a giant.

His struggles grew feebler. I looked into his face and saw the coward manifest therein. Disguised well as it might be in his bravado strut of life, it came out at the pinch of death.

One last effort he made, and then his limbs grew quiet. I held him for a while, looking all the time at the white sheet of paper that lay at my feet, my anger nourished at the sight. Then I took him in my two hands, and, walking to the Head, flung him over.

I went back to the others. When, before, I had killed the seamen, my eyes rose not to meet my neighbours'; but now I looked them in the face. The shame of blood-spilling was not in my soul as before, neither did I discern aught of that feeling in their eyes to me, and each came forward and took my hand gravely, without

many words, save from Daredevil, who still harped on the same string that "that should have been *my* job !"

When Gallows Dick had rejoined us we tethered our beasts in the hollow, and, climbing again to the Head, weary and with sore limbs from our long ride, we lay down upon the grass.

Underneath us was the mouth of the river—narrow towards the sea, but opening the wider the further it went inland. Dimly we could see the *Rover* in the centre of the bay, moored fore and aft with her cables, with plenty of berth room, as Daredevil told us, to swing her round in case she was surprised.

"And axes lying ready to cut the cables, too," he added; "for, whatever else Manners was, he was a prudent and canny captain."

Further inland, on the same side of the bay as ourselves, Daredevil pointed out to us the white tent where those sailors slept who had not found other lodging.

We lay for a while too weary even to think, until at last the rising wind made the blood run chill in our veins.

"What's to be done next ?" said Jock.

No one answered for a little. A thought came suddenly into my brain, and, at the heat of it, without pondering on the method of attainment, I rose to my feet and cried:

“Let’s tak’ the *Rover* !”

They raised themselves upon their elbows to look at me.

“Let’s tak’ the *Rover* !” cried Daredevil, with a sneer, though I could see the very daring of the proposal had found a friend in him. “Let’s tak’ the *Rover*, indeed ! Suppose wo do manage it, what are we likely to do with her ? Do ye think we could navigate her properly, or even win her clear of the bay ? Man, afore ye could question it she would be aground on this same Head.”

“I dinna say we could navigate her properly,” I urged, “but surely five sturdy men could mak’ a shape at it.”

“Five sturdy men,” said Daredevil, imitating my tone, “five sturdy men, but two of whom have never been on the sea in their lives, barring across the Channel maybe as passengers. But even letting that go by unquestioned, how are ye to get her out of the bay ?”

“As for that,” I replied, “Seth Rilas here is the best man for giving us an opinion. D’ye think it’s possible, Seth?” I asked.

Seth got up on his feet and gave a seaman’s look all round.

“Wind nor’-nor’-west, rising fast, likely to blow great guns,” I heard him mutter, and then he turned to me, asking :

“Could ye promise me time to get up a jib, Maister Tak’-the-ship?”

Now I had not got that far with my plan, but I even took it upon me to give him that promise.

“Then it’s possible,” said Seth, quietly. “Only it’ll be touch and go—mair touch than go, I misdoubt. It’ll maybe be a deil of a scrape by.”

“Supposing we risk that,” said Jock, now hot as myself with the idea. “Supposing we risk that, could ye undertake to tak’ her into port, safe, with a crew of—three landsmen, ane hauf sodger, hauf sailor, and yersel’?”

“It’ll be as God wills,” said Seth. “I’ll no disguise frae ye the fact that it’ll be a rotten crew and a risky voyage, but I’ll no say it nay if ye so decide.”

“Then what d’ye say, Daredevil?” I asked.
“Will we chance it?”

“Oh! I’m with ye,” he said, gallantly and carelessly. “It’ll be a near thing, but then a near thing is just what I like. I might as well tell ye that it’ll be a nearer thing than you seem to imagine; for, apart from the danger itself, Manners was expecting the *Hawk* to join him about this time. If the *Hawk* meets ye on the road away with the *Rover*, there’ll be some bonny explanations needed before ye come oot of the affair with whole skins.

“However, if we mean to get Simon Carter clear, ye’ll have to board the *Rover*; and if we board the *Rover*, we might as well get killed for a sheep as a lamb. So I say, if ye’re that way inclined, then hurrah for the pirate pirated!”

So there and then, without further palaver, we decided on risking the greater chance, and laid our plans accordingly, the which I will not trouble to write, as what they were or what they were not will appear in the action itself.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE PIRATE PIRATED.

“IF we mean to get the *Rover* out,” cried Seth, as we went down the hill, “we’ll hae to hurry, for the tide’s juist on the turn.”

With this new incentive to spur us on, we made towards the sea where the longboat and, we supposed, the dingey lay, the latter being the one that Manners would probably use in his coming ashore.

When we got to within three hundred yards of the spot, the four of us dropped down full length on the sand and let Daredevil go forward alone, either to cajole the man who had come ashore with Manners into joining the seamen in the tent or get rid of him in some way.

Presently we heard the voices speaking :

“Is that cursed Captain of ours no coming soon ?” cried the sailor’s voice. “Does he think I’m made of metal that he should keep me aboot here in a wind like this for hours ?”

“Toots, man,” said Daredevil, “ye must have patience; he’ll be here in less than two hours from now.”

“Two hours !” cried the seaman, “two devils you mean ! Man, mate,” he added, in a persuasive tone, “ye might tak’ my place for a wee bit. I’m deid cauld, and sair in need of a wee drap. Just ye bide by the boat and I’ll slip doon to the tent. I’ll be back in less than twenty minutes. Come on, mate, dae a comrade a guid turn when it’s in yer power.”

“If I was sure of ye coming back,” we heard Daredevil mutter thoughtfully.

“I gie ye my word I’ll no be hauf an hour,” the seaman urged.

“Speed away then,” said Daredevil, “and here, comrade, nip a flask of Hollands for me when ye’re at it.”

The man’s feet crunched the sand as he ran, and we barely let the sound die away ere we were round the boat, eager to be at the work. With mighty goodwill we put our shoulders to the longboat, and soon had it afloat. We had all got in, and out the oars, when Daredevil jumped ashore again, and strode over to where

the dingey' lay. With a lusty kick of the foot he drove in some of the planks, insomuch as to render it useless as a boat.

"We might be detained yonder," he explained as he got in, with a jerk of his head in the direction of the *Rover*, "and I've no wish to tak' more of the creatures' lives than is necessary. They might come bothering about us, ye see, if we left them the means of it."

The boat drove slowly over the water. Ever and again we had to turn her head west to make up the leeway, for the wind was now blowing half a gale.

Presently we got alongside the *Rover*. We had expected that of the seven men on board two or three might be on the watch and the rest asleep; but circumstances proved us wrong, for we had forgotten to take into our calculations the plunder of the *Marie*. As it turned out the whole seven were sitting in the cabin counting out their ill-gotten gold. There were only five of them at the job at the first, but soon the two who had been left on the watch, their ears tickled by the clink of the coin, crept down and joined the others. This was the reason

we were not hailed as we got near the *Rover*; and though unaware of what had given rise to our good-fortune, we were quick to take advantage of it.

We sailed into the lee of the *Rover*, and were feeling round her side for the ladder, when all of a sudden a squall, fiercer than usual, drove the longboat with a thud against the side of the ship.

Instantly there were cries from those within the ship, and though we had found the ladder and made haste to ascend, it was only in time to confront the seven men, who with bare cutlasses had rushed on deck.

When they saw Daredevil, however, their fear went from them, and they came towards us.

“Is the Captain no with ye?” cried one of them, a great brawny seaman, with shoulders on him like a bullock’s.

“No,” cried Daredevil, “he’s not with me, neither will he ever walk this deck again; for he’s dead!” And with that he whipped out his sword, and engaged him who had asked the question.

We were not far behind him, and soon there

was a pretty to-do on board the *Rover*. I had had some dealings with the *Rover's* men before this; but I now knew that it was not with the best of them, for their fighting was not to be compared to that of our opponents.

Each of the five were quick to select their man, while two of them kept running about, trying to get behind us, and aye prod prodding away with their cutlasses whenever they saw a chance.

It was a most fierce and bloody combat. We who had boarded had to get the better of them, or die in the attempt. There was no middle way out of it. They fought for their ship, the plunder, and their lives; seeing that for the latter no quarter would be offered, and seeking none, since they had so manifest an advantage over us.

Jock was the first to get down his man, though it had cost him dear; for he was twice wounded, once in the leg and then again in the side. He tackled one of the two who had been so free with their blades, and though weak with loss of blood, still managed to keep up a good sword.

Just then Simon's head appeared as he came up the ladder from the fore cabin. I could have laughed at the sight of it had I not been so busy. I only got a glimpse of it at that time; but a more laughable make-up I never saw, since I knew that it was a make-believe. The colour of it was meant to be blue, but in the starlight it looked a vivid green.

"A good sword, Maister Carter!" I cried.

"Duras!" he exclaimed in astonishment.

"Tak' a blade and fa' to!" I cried.

He got upon the deck with a vigour that spoke well for his years and ill for his supposed sickness.

"Wi' great pleasure, lad," he said, going up to the mast and taking a cutlass from the rack.

Now the fight was more equal, for we had each a man and one only.

Up to this time I had been making a fair show of fence myself; but, putting more strength into my play, I found to my terror that I had burst the old wounds which I had got in the former *mêlée*. At the first I was taken aback, and played so wildly that had my opponent been watchful he might have taken

his advantage. But this he did not, and on recovering my nerve I saw that he had something else in his mind than only the fight. Since our numbers had been equalised we had been less careful of keeping the bulwark of the *Rover* at our backs, and at that moment I was fighting near the centre of the deck. I could not understand what my man was meaning to be at, for he kept circling round and round; but, when he had got between the side of the vessel where we had boarded and myself, suddenly he let drive a vicious lunge at me. I sprang back and parried it also, though it had near brought me to grief. The lunge was so reckless that he had laid himself open to a sure return, and I had drawn back my hand to give him the *coup de grace*, when to my astonishment he let fall his sword and sprang for the side of the ship, tumbling over the bulwark ere I could draw breath.

“Don’t let him win away with the boat,” cried Daredevil, quickly.

I ran to the side, and plunged my sword after him. I missed the man, but cut one of the ropes of the ladder, so that it swung round with

his weight, and his foot got entangled in the cords.

He struggled violently to release it, and had got it clear again, and was descending hand under hand, when I brought my sword down on the remaining rope and cut it through. The longboat had swung out from the side a little, and in his fall the man's head struck one of the rowlocks with a ghastly thud ere he disappeared into the water. I waited for a little to see if he would reappear, but never a sign of him could I see.

I turned just in time to see Simon's man go down before him. Jock was the hardest pressed, so I went to his aid, and soon between us we had sent the man to answer for his crimes.

Simon had gone to the help of Seth Rilas, so Jock and I turned to where Daredevil and the brawny seaman he had engaged at the first kept up their combat. When this man saw us come towards him he gave a great cry of rage, and his face lighted up with a fiendish glare.

"Ye at least shall never enjoy the price of yer treachery!" he cried to Daredevil, and,

dropping his sword, he sprang swiftly upon him ere Daredevil could prevent him. Lifting him like a babe in his arms the seaman ran with him to the side of the ship, and before Jock or I could get near enough to stay him he leaped with his burden into the dark waters. As they went overboard I saw Daredevil let his sword go and reach quickly for his dirk.

We ran to the side, but stare as we might no sign of the two could we see. The sea had risen, and the wind was driving the waves into white foam.

“Can he swim?” I yelled to Jock.

“No a stroke!” Jock cried, sadly.

“Then here goes!” I cried, throwing off my doublet.

Never shall I forget the icy grip of the waters round my heart as I went deep into them with the force of my dive from the deck. I thought I should never get to the surface again. When I did, and as soon as I got my breath, I peered anxiously all around for a sign of Daredevil, but not a thing was to be seen save the wide expanse of white. Presently, however, against the wind I heard a faint cry. I struck out in

the direction of it, pausing only to free my dirk, lest it might be the seaman who had given it.

Again came the cry; this time it was fainter, and from one in mortal agony. A small black speck against the white I saw for a moment; the next, it had disappeared. I got to the spot in time to grip it as it came up again. 'Twas Daredevil, and I could have shouted in my joy. 'Twas Daredevil, and as gallant as ever, though more than half drowned.

"Put yer arm round my back!" I cried to him; and when he had done this and was floating comfortably (comparatively) by my side, I began to make for the *Rover* again.

I was saved the dreich hard swim against the wind and tide, however, for Seth came down with the longboat and took us in. As we pulled at the oars on the way back I cried to Daredevil:

"How did ye manage to get rid of him?"

"I sent my dirk to his heart before we had struck the water," Daredevil answered. "It pained him so that he flung open his arms in his agony; I kicked out from him, and

here I am," he added, laughingly, "thanks to ye."

"And here *we* are," I replied, as we got on board, "sole owners of the *Rover*, thanks to ye."

"One good turn deserves another!" he cried. "But don't be so crouse about the *Rover* till ye get her safe into port."

CHAPTER XXXIV.

THE END OF THE FIGHT, BUT NOT OF THE FAVOUR.

SETH RILAS being the only true sailor among us, naturally took command of the *Rover*; and, weak with our wounds, stiff and sore, now that the heat of the fight was by, we found in him a hard taskmaster.

“Up wi’ the jib, lads, and quick, if ye want to win clear this tide !” he cried.

We did our best; but this was poor enough, for the wind caught the sail ere it was half set, and after that we could not budge it an inch. Just as we had begun to raise it, Simon at the bow and Seth at the stern cut the *Rover* from her moorings.

Seth ran to the rudder and got a grip of it, then turned to see what sort a shape we had made of our task.

His barrenness of speech deserted him at the

sight of our failure, and I have rarely heard a more comprehensive string of curses than the language he flung at us.

“Ye expect me to tak’ ye oot of this narrow bay wi’ *that* only to mak’ steerage way !” he cried. “Ye lubbers, dae ye think this is a drying green that ye should hang oot yer shirts to flap in the wind ? We had sma’ chance before, but the Lord hae mercy on oor souls noo !”

Under bare poles the *Rover* had been straining at her cables like to break them; but now, freed, and with some little sail on, she sprang away like a thing of life. Wearily, I took a look at the fast approaching headland, towards which we seemed to be making straight as an arrow from the bow, wondering if that was to be the outcome of all our hard, bloody work. It was pitiful if it was to be, but it pained me very little after all. A languid feeling came over me that I could not have shaken off had I been inclined to try. So I stood and watched as one lies and dreams.

I saw Seth jamming her tiller hard up, and Simon running to his aid to keep it there. I

took a look at the headland again to see if the *Rover* had answered to her helm, but could discern little difference.

Now we were near it. Little by little the *Rover's* head was coming up into the wind, but it seemed too little to clear us, so fast were we driving.

The crisis came, and with a scrape we won past and out into clear water. A faint cheer came from the stern as I let myself drop to the deck, and curled myself up where I dropped.

Simon came up to me after a while, near dancing with pleasure, and was for me to join him in his joy; but I turned irritably from him.

"We've tricked them, lad!" he shouted. "Tricked them bravely! Tell us all about it, Duras."

"Oh, let me sleep," I cried, with an oath. "Read that, and you'll get some news," I added, putting into his hands the letter Rose had written to Manners.

He did so and came back for more information, but I treated him scurvily, and he went to Jock; but Jock had just finished binding

his wounds, and he drove Simon from him with oaths.

Daredevil was occupied in trying to substitute wine for the water he had unwittingly swallowed, and with him Gallows Dick was playing a good trencher, both being well gone in their cups by this time. Little did Simon get from him, and less from Seth, for when he went to the latter Seth silently put the tiller into his hands, then curled himself up like a dog at his feet.

So the *Rover* drove through that night of tempest at the mercy of God and His winds, one man being at her tiller and the rest asleep and heart-weary.

I was awakened in the morning by a sound like the report of a cannon in my ears, and looking up I saw the reason of it. A squall fiercer than the others had blown the jib into ribbons. It was the last of the gale, however, for slowly the wind sank to rest after that.

I rubbed the sleep from my eyes and, sore and stiff, got upon my feet. About half a mile from us I saw a ship, flying a signal of distress. She was wallowing heavily in the sea, and so

far down in the bow that one, even a landsman, could see that she had strained herself and was taking water freely.

Simon and Seth were watching her at the stern, and I got from them the knowledge that she was the *Hawk*, Manners' consort. Even were we so inclined we could have rendered them no help, and so we stood watching the ship go down into her grave.

"She's in a fair way to join Manners," was Jock's remark, and even while he spoke, with her stern rising to the dive, the *Hawk* plunged from out of our sight.

"Peace be to their souls!" cried Jock, gravely. "They're deid noo," he added, more lightly, "and we should speak nae ill of the deid, but ane canna forbear the remark that there was a guid riddance o' bad rubbish."

Now, when the wind had abated, and we had managed to get up more sail on the *Rover*—not, you may imagine, in a way to please Seth, but still sufficient to carry us into Anstruther,—Simon at last got a full description of the various events that had happened in his absence, and learned with certainty what he

had guessed from the letter, that the ransom demanded for him was not money but his daughter's honour.

He was loud in his praise at my conduct, louder than was his wont in praise, and I bethought me that nowhere could I get a better opportunity and time of broaching the matter of my love than at present. It was with some diffidence that I began my tale, for Rose had told me of the set of his mind with regard to her, and that embraced her marriage with a goldsmith in Edinburgh, a middle-aged man by the name of George Heriot, a wealthy man, and likely to be more so.

As soon as he gathered my meaning his praises stopped and his brows went down.

"Ay, ay," he said lightly, "we'll speak of this some other time."

"There's nae time like the present, Maister Carter," I made bold to say.

He glowered at me across the cabin table and said :

"At least even ye will give me time to consider the matter in."

"How long?" I said, getting up, with a

sudden determination in my mind to make an end of the matter boldly for good or ill, putting on a brave front, as Rose had told me I was too little inclined to do.

“ Oh, a day or two,” he said, carelessly.

“ I’ll tell Seth,” I said, opening the door.

“ Tell him what ? ” cried Simon.

“ To cruise about for a day or two,” I replied. “ I’m owner of this ship, ye maun remember.”

He looked at me darkly for a while, but I met his gaze straightly and was no whit abashed.

“ I’m an ill man to drive, Duras,” he said, quietly.

“ I’ve tried leading ye, Maister Carter,” I replied, quietly, “ and that wi’ ill success.”

“ Sae ye would keep me on board till I consent, wad ye ? ” he cried, threateningly.

“ I would,” I replied, recklessly.

A subtle smile crossed his lips as he said:

“ Well, I like ye nane the waur for’t.”

“ How’s it to be then, Maister Carter ? ” I asked after a while.

“ Duras,” he replied, “ I’ll be fair wi’ ye.

Ye've done me a grand turn, and I would like to requite ye for it. But this ye ask runs sair against the plans I've been laying for some years. Now, instead of the daughter, suppose I offer ye a partnership in my business, what would ye say till that ? ”

“ That the offer was unworthy of ye and of me,” I said quickly.

“ I was a wee sweart to propound it,” he answered, and then sunk his head into his shoulders, pondering deeply for a time. At last he raised his head. “ Duras,” he said, “ I'll gie ye a fair chance. If Rose says yea I'll not say nay.”

He said it in such a simple way, that for a moment I thought he had given way; but a little reflection on my part made me take another view of it, for, in my companionship with the man, I had got the knowledge that the simpler the expression of his face the more cunning there was in the brain behind. I knew Rose's love and obedience to her father in all things, and I knew that he was depending upon it to help him. But for all his cunning he had this advantage, in that he was ignorant

of the fact that Rose had plighted her troth to me.

I was content to trust in the maid. She had told me that she loved me, and so I said yea to his proposal, content to place on the steadfastness of her love the hope of my happiness. Content ! Ay, more than content !

Circumstances proved me right, for when the *Rover* drew into the harbour, Rose was the first to come on board. With one look at her father only, she came into my arms for a moment before going to him.

“What does this mean ?” he cried, roughly, putting her from him.

I would have answered; but Rose was before me, and coming again to my side, said:

“No; and for this reason, a woman shall leave her father and shall cleave unto him.”

Then breaking down from her proud statement, my loving maid ran to her father, crying:

“Oh ! father, I couldna help it. For yer sake I would have liked to have gone yer way, but Davie was ower muckle for me.”

“Ay, he was ower muckle for me, too,” said

Simon, grimly, but taking Rose into his arms. "I thought I was guid at a bargain, but he turns out to be my better ; so, Duras, I suppose we maun juist change the title of my house intil Carter & Duras."

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"And is that all ?" asks a little maid of twelve, as like Rose as a pea to another, and for whose pleasure this story was written in the long winter evenings.

"What more could there be ?" I asked in reply.

"Then you got mother ?" the little maid asks.

"Ay, that I did."

"And what came after that ?"

"Why, ye did, ye little witch," I answer.

"Did I ?" she asks, with her big black eyes wide open in surprise. "Why, then I know all the rest myself. Ye made a lot of money, and then grandfather died; and then one day ye went away to see the place where ye were born in and where yer father and mother

lived. Then ye came here to live instead of in Anstruther."

"What are ye two conspirators plotting now?" asks another Rose, coming into the hall and putting her hand on my shoulder.

"Father has just finished the story, mother," cries little Rose.

"And what's to be its name, Davie?" she asks.

"I was thinking of calling it 'My Sweetheart Rose,'" I said.

"Call it 'Fighting for Favour,' Davie," she says, with a smile, "for a hard heart had I till——"

"Till when?" I ask with a smile.

"Till ye won your fight!" answers my wife, yet ever my Rose.

THE END.





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